UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims
Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum respects the copyright and other intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection and makes good faith efforts to determine the copyright status of such materials. The Museum has a good faith belief that the materials in this collection may be made publicly available. The Museum welcomes additional information about copyright status. If you have additional information or concerns about the copyright ownership of materials in this collection, please contact the Museum's Library by phone at 202-479-9717 or by email at reference@ushmm.org.

The Aryan Jew

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

https://archive.org/details/bib292265

A human life is like a closed letter; it's hard to predict the contents, good or bad news, beforehand.

Jadwiga Wisniewski

AUTHORS' NOTE/OUTLINE

This book is a celebration of survival of a Polish mother and her son. During the period of time spanning 1939 through 1945, these two members of a once large Jewish family managed to exist in a war-torn country that had virtually turned its back on its own Jewish population. As World War II raged through Poland, Jadwiga and Roman Wisniewski would come to understand that not only their own strength and effort, but also the kindness and generosity of family members, friends, acquaintances and many strangers, some whose names they would never know, saved them from the horrors of the Holocaust. Their resolve enabled them to escape the detection of their Jewish heritage which for so many, including all of the other members of their family, had led to death. Although the fear of exposure hung over them daily, Jadwiga and Roman remained in Poland, eking out a meager existence throughout this tragic period of time. Jadwiga chronicled their life experiences, from the summer of 1939 through Poland's liberation in 1945, in the form of a journal. That journal, combined with the recollections of Jadwiga's son, Roman, comprise their story titled The Aryan Jew.

Carol and Paige Christ

Chapter 1

The summer of 1939, for Jadwiga Wisniewski as for countless other people, had become very troublesome. Rumors of an impending war were circulating openly and Jadwiga wondered if she should return to her home, cutting her much needed vacation short by many days. She was relaxing in Krynika, a country town famous for its hot springs and soothing mineral baths that was located in the southeastern mountains of Poland on the Czechoslovakian border. The vacation had been a surprise present from her husband, Isidore, who had wanted to reward Jadwiga for all her hard work assisting him in managing their thriving embroidery business. The night Isidore had given Jadwiga her itinerary, she had cried, not because of her husband's loving gesture, but because her husband had so overtly expressed his love for her. Isidore was very handsome with his fine features and impeccable sense of style, and women paid him many compliments. Jadwiga was somewhat insecure that as the years continued, she would be unable to hold his attention. But that night, he had told her how proud he was of her, and how completely he loved her. She had laughed with joy at his generosity, and then had snuggled into his arms, content that she was the luckiest woman on earth.

Although she had only been at the resort for three days, she had quickly made many friends, including the famous singer, Jan Kiepura, who owned the villa. And, every night the villa had been rife with singing, dancing, story telling and general good humor. The days were spent partaking of fine meals and sumptuous water treatments, and Jadwiga was loath to leave the activities and her new friends simply because of a rumor.

Jadwiga was confident that her husband would advise her to stay and enjoy herself, and that was exactly what she did for another entire day and night. On the morning of the fifth day, however, Jadwiga heard some of the other guests talking about their preparations to return to their homes, as they did not like what they were hearing about this impending war. One couple, an older couple, was

even planning to leave Poland completely because they felt the rumors bore too much resemblance to the last 'Great War'. It alarmed Jadwiga that their feelings echoed the statements made by her parents about their experiences in Poland in WWI, but she was still reluctant to cut her vacation short.

Dinner the night before found everyone discussing the situation and the manager of the villa had desperately been trying to minimize the importance of the news. "Such a thing is impossible," he had said shaking his head. "It's just empty rumors." Jadwiga knew that his dismissal was due to his fear of losing his paying guests for the summer.

By this next morning, however, the news was more ominous and impossible to ignore. Several of the guests packed their belongings and left the resort for their homes. Jadwiga decided that there was nothing else for her to do but to return home without delay. She had to admit that she was now frightened, and the fact that she was cut off from her family scared her even more. She hoped her fears were unfounded and she prayed that Isidore would not scold her for being so silly as to end her vacation short over nothing. So, after a skipped dinner and sleepless night, the following morning she hastily washed, dressed, and set out for the railroad station to change the date of her return ticket. The villa's driver was nowhere to be found, so Jadwiga was forced to hire a carriage to take her to the station. She asked the carriage driver if he could wait while she had her ticket changed, but he declined stating that the wait would be too long. Jadwiga was immediately angry with the driver and told him so. He asked if she had been away from the villa in the last couple of days, to which she replied no. He started to explain why he couldn't wait for her at the station, but then fell silent, appearing to decide that it was best for her to find out on her own.

The sight that greeted Jadwiga as she arrived at the railway station was completely shocking and unexpected. There were long lines of exhausted people, many of whom she was told had been waiting for two days to purchase their tickets. They, like Jadwiga, were anxious to get home to their loved ones. Most of the people had brought food with them, but with little shelter and the

atmosphere of unrest, the food offered little comfort. Everyone was in a foul mood, and arguments were erupting all around her. One woman complained that someone was standing too close to her in the line, and was therefore trying to steal her place. The accused became so incensed that she actually pushed the accuser out of the line. That in turn caused other people to start shouting and shoving one another. Some women started crying, and the men-folk became involved in trying to calm things down and even began fighting amongst themselves. Jadwiga didn't know what to do, as she was not accustomed to being around people who behaved in such a manner. She felt disgusted but also very nervous should she have to defend herself.

Jadwiga was also starving. She had not eaten that morning at the villa, nor had she brought food with her. She briefly considered asking someone if she could purchase something of theirs' to eat, but that would mean losing her place in the growing line and besides, she didn't know what the reaction would be to her request. It was a cold morning, and she pulled her shawl more tightly around her shoulders, wrapping the ends under her chin. Although she tried to block it out, the whispers of the people around her troubled Jadwiga more than the rumors of war. The people said that there might not be any trains running after all. Jadwiga tried in vain to remain brave and calm, but in spite of her efforts she could feel tears welling up in her eyes, and to her dismay, they started to drip down her cheeks. She kept wiping away the tears, and as if that wasn't enough, it was getting colder and the wind was kicking up. Her arms were aching from clutching her handbag so tightly against her chest. Her anxiety was reaching a hysterical peak when at last, at some point in the late afternoon, she found herself at the ticket window. She changed the time of her return ticket to Kalisz and wasted no time finding a carriage to rush back to the villa.

As Jadwiga was climbing the stairs to her room, several of her new friends, stragglers who were determined to party until the war was officially declared and the villa burned to the ground, were climbing down, laughing and talking about last evenings events. They reached out to scoop Jadwiga into their circle, but

she declined, somewhat breathlessly, stating that she wasn't feeling very well. Once she reached her room, she gathered her belongings and threw them into the cases without a shadow of the care that she and Gosposia had taken to pack them initially. Thinking back, it had taken Konstancia Koperska, referred to as Gosposia, the Wisniewski's Christian housekeeper and close friend, an entire day to wash, iron and help Jadwiga pack her cases for the two-week trip. Jadwiga was now distressed that no matter how many times she packed and repacked the cases, several of her things still would not fit and allow her to close the cases. Frustrated, she finally ripped out the offending garments, cast them aside, locked the luggage and left her room. Each piece of luggage had to be dragged down the stairs by Jadwiga since the porter was missing. By the time she hailed another carriage, she was sore and exhausted.

One of the guests poked their head out of the parlor and asked where Jadwiga was going, but she rushed by without answering and they did not offer to help her. For some reason that she could not define, she knew that she had to be hasty in her departure. Stopping at the front room, a library that had been converted into an office, she settled her account, made her excuses to the hotel manager, and hurried back to the train station hours before her departure. Along the way she stopped only long enough to send a telegram to her husband announcing her sudden return and time of arrival in their hometown of Kalisz. Jadwiga did not even stop to eat because she was so rushed and upset, but as she sat waiting for the train to arrive, she wished she had brought food. Briefly, she considered buying food to be eaten on the train, but she was uncomfortable that a repeat of an incident on the trip to the resort would occur. Gosposia had carefully packed Jadwiga finger sandwiches for her trip, and when Jadwiga offered one to a bedraggled looking girl staring intently at the sandwiches, the child's mother whisked the little one away scolding her for talking to strangers. The mother looked Jadwiga up and down as she spoke to the girl, stating that, "You never know when someone could be Jewish." It was not the first time that Jadwiga had been forced to deal with the animosity of the Christian Poles against

the Jewish residents of Poland, but it was certainly the most uncomfortable she had personally faced.

She must have looked at her timepiece a dozen times a minute, and thought she would go crazy with waiting. Amazingly enough, the train arrived on time, but it was packed with passengers who had boarded at other stations along the way. Jadwiga's heart sank. She looked at the luggage around her feet, enough it seemed to take a six-month trip, and started to drag it up the stairs and into the train. Several times she had to fight her way into the crowded space, and when she was finally ready to sit, she found that all the seats had been taken. A kindly older man stood and graciously offered Jadwiga his own. She felt a little guilty accepting his space, but she was on the verge of hysteria and so nervous of being alone in this ominous situation, that she was afraid if she had to stand the entire way, her legs would not hold her. She thanked him graciously and sat down.

The train passengers never stopped their frenzied talking. Everyone seemed obsessed by all of the rumors that had been circulating. Jadwiga wanted to stand up and scream to everyone to shut-up, but of course she did not. Trying to block out the conversations around her proved more difficult than she imagined, but her concentrated attempts to block the words made the time pass quickly, and soon she found herself at the familiar station of Kalisz.

Chapter 2

Her happiness upon seeing her husband waiting for her at the station was short lived. Isidore looked pale and agitated and his shirt was dreadfully wrinkled. In between brief lapses of silence, he told her she had to listen to what he had to say, but then no information was forthcoming. Jadwiga stared at him for what seemed to be an eternity before he so much as moved to load her suitcases into the carriage, and even then he didn't move to do it until he saw that she was going to do it herself. She waited impatiently until Isidore was ready to explain.

Jadwiga climbed into the carriage and nestled her handbag on the floor between her feet. Isidore climbed in behind her soon after and, with a flick of his wrist, the horses moved forward. The ride felt endless and was not at all enjoyable. Jadwiga wished that Isidore had brought their company automobile, a Polish Fiat to greet her as she didn't like the smell of horses and today the odor seemed more pungent than usual.

Only when they were well underway, did Isidore finally turn to Jadwiga. He told her that he had started packing their belongings because they had to leave Kalisz. Half of the population, he said, had already been evacuated. They themselves had one day in which to pack their belongings and decide where they should go. "It's war," he told Jadwiga, "and Kalisz is going to be the site of a large military mobilization. It is no longer safe for you and the children here." Jadwiga was too stunned to speak. She tried, but her throat had closed off and no sounds were forthcoming. Surely, Isidore was exaggerating.

Instantly, thoughts of their beautiful home flashed through her mind. Located in the middle of Kalisz, which was 70 miles due West of Lodz and 150 miles Southwest of Warsaw, their enormous eight-room apartment on the Aleie Josefiny, overlooked a park on one side, and a theater at the end of their cul-de-sac from the other. She thought of her son Roman, named after Isidore's brother Roman, who was killed at the age of 17 while fighting for Poland, playing in the park under the watchful eye of Gosposia. She also pictured herself and her

friends sitting and talking on the benches under the chestnut trees that lined their gray cobblestone street. Visions of her family ice-skating in the park in the wintertime when the Prosna River, which ran through the middle of the park, froze, all moving in time to the music played on the weekends by a local orchestra, went through her mind. She remembered the summers spent in that park when she and Isidore would join their son, Roman, and their daughter, Halinka, sometimes renting a boat from one of the clubs stationed along the banks of the river and sailing out of the park and down the river to have lovely picnics in far-away locations. On some of these trips Isidore would enjoy the strzelnica (shooting gallery), and quite often the family would stop along the way, cut into trees and drink the sap.

But now, Isidore just kept repeating that they had to leave it all behind. He kept saying that they were to go to Zdunska Wola, where it would be safe and away from any danger. As the words registered in her mind, her shock prevented her from commenting right away. She had not yet found the words to question this madness, when he further shocked her by informing Jadwiga that he would not be staying with them after the evacuation when she and the children reached safety. Jadwiga shook her head back and forth and her mouth dropped open. When at last Jadwiga found her voice, it was an angry one. She questioned what he meant by leaving their lovely home, she questioned what he meant by military mobilization, and she most vehemently questioned what he meant by abandoning her and the children. “I am a military man in the reserves. I must once again be here for my country as it has always been here for me. When you and the children are safe in Zdunska Wola, I will return to Kalisz to serve my country.”

Jadwiga cried out an animal sound, fraught with frustration. A wild hysteria overtook her, but no matter how she pleaded, she could not change Isidore’s mind, nor could she get him to explain the situation any further. Like Jadwiga, he was also in shock, and kept running his fingers through his unwashed hair, a feral look in his eyes as he drove the horses on. For just a moment Jadwiga’s hysteria lifted when she looked at her crazed husband, and

her sense of irony kicked in. Isidore was the most honorable and loyal man that she had ever known. And when it came to his country, Isidore would always fulfill his commitment. After all, not many people had been honored with the Virtuti Military Award, Poland's highest military honor. He had won it in 1918 fighting against the Russians with Marshall Pitsudzski to successfully win Poland's freedom. And on some level Jadwiga understood his need to fight again, that he hadn't fought so long and hard for Poland to fall under some other country's rule once again. Furthermore, she knew that everything they had, their wealth and social position, was owed to the Polish government who had subsidized their business as a reward for Isidore's services. It was true that Isidore had made the business successful all on his own, but it would never have been possible without government help. She knew all this, but it certainly did not make it any easier on her. Jadwiga was confused and petrified at what was to be, and lapsed into hysteria once again.

Isidore stopped the carriage and turned Jadwiga to face him. They were close to their home and he begged her not to behave in this manor in front of the children, who were as yet unaware of the seriousness of the situation. Jadwiga knew that she had to accept Isidore's decision and trust that he would take the safest course of action for the family. She accepted his counsel to remain calm and focused and began to prepare for their journey to Zdunska Wola, a town located about forty miles South of Kalisz. She swallowed her fear, her frustration, and her shock and blotted her eyes with a handkerchief. Isidore smiled thinly at Jadwiga and together they entered their home to begin preparations.

Since their Fiat had limited storage space, Isidore and Jadwiga had great difficulty deciding what to take and what to leave behind. They raided Isidore's home office where many fine fabrics were stored and, as many of the fabrics as they could stuff into a trunk were the first items to be packed. Isidore felt that should he need to find employment, the fabrics would guarantee a position. It was true that uniform insignias, eagle patches and epaulets would more than likely be needed by the army, and the collars and bodices they created for ladies

dresses would always be in demand, so Jadwiga agreed to sacrifice many of their household items in favor of the fabrics. Jadwiga wasn't sure there would continue to be a call for scout merit badges or table linens, that were also made in their factories, but that was of no consequence to her now. Next, they selected several pictures, jewelry and other personal keepsakes to pack among all the necessary clothing and supplies that would fill their cases. There was so much to take that Jadwiga's pockets ripped open from their overfilled contents. There were items strewn all over the home and the haste and confusion surrounding this move reminded Jadwiga of her family's experience in 1914 at the outbreak of WWI, when her parents were also forced to escape from Kalisz with their seven children. Jean's father had owned many horses and delivered mail like the Pony Express in the United States. The family had to leave their home and all the horses. At first the family hid in a cellar in Kalisz and then later escaped to Pleszeno. The Germans destroyed all of the family's horses and were so depraved and barbaric at that time that they killed many people and put the severed heads of the dead Polish families on fences and stakes around the town to intimidate and frighten the townsfolk.

Preparing for this move proved to be more difficult than they had anticipated and the packing took many hours. Halinka, their thirteen year-old daughter, complained about the items Jadwiga and Isidore were leaving behind, and Jadwiga was unable to satisfactorily explain their choices. Their ten year-old son, Roman, kept asking if he could help, but every time he was given a task he had so many questions about what to do and where to do it, that ultimately Isidore requested that he sit with his sister and play some sort of game. Jadwiga, meanwhile, was unable to control her bouts of crying, which were made more hopeless by Isidore's constant lecturing on how Jadwiga had to be strong for her children.

After hours of packing and re-arranging, they managed to load all the suitcases into the car and Jadwiga, her husband, and their two children, left the city. As they drove away, several people commented on the luck of the

Wisniewskis, since after all, very few people had the luxury of driving a car in small Polish towns, and it was always an event to see a car in use. Halinka's face, so much like her mother's with its dark complexion, could be clearly seen looking out the back of the car as it drove away. It was a face that contained tears that couldn't wash away her fears.

Chapter 3

The Wisneiwskis were followed out of the city by many of their factory employees who had found their own means of transportation, and trusted Isidore to lead them to safety. Their housekeeper, Gosposia, was not with them, as she had decided to join a cousin in a nearby village. This was a crushing blow to Jadwiga and the children, as they had expected Gosposia to stay with them. However, Gosposia would not be far from their home and since Isidore and Jadwiga were unable to take all their belongings with them, they rewarded Gosposia with a large sum of money to look after their apartment and belongings while they were gone. Gosposia wished them excellent luck on their journey, and prayed that it would be a safe one.

The trip to Zdunska Wola was indeed uneventful, although Roman was more restless than ever and he and Halinka picked at one another incessantly. Jadwiga, meanwhile, was too depressed to discipline the children and Isidore was so lost in his own thoughts that he didn't seem to hear them. Upon their arrival in this new town, Isidore was easily able to secure rooms in a tiny second floor area over an old storage room. It was September and the building was located on the outskirts of the town between a large factory on the right side and a big field on the left. Further up the road the village center could be found. Isidore felt that Jadwiga and the children would be safer on the outskirts of town where they were less likely to meet people. Isidore carried their bags to the new apartment and then stored the trunk of fabrics and some of their clothes in a large building next door to the apartment. No sooner had the car been unloaded than Isidore told his family that it was time for him to return to Kalisz to join his military unit. The family barely spoke after Isidore's pronouncement, and Halinka sat down on one of the trunks and stared ahead without really seeing. Isidore left quickly and silently and mother, son and daughter felt totally lost after his departure. Jadwiga was particularly affected and could not stop shaking her head. She was alone in a strange town, among total strangers, and for the first time in her life had the

sole responsibility of taking care of and providing for her two children. She wasn't sure that she was capable of doing that which Isidore had done so well. She felt the tears welling up again and dropped down to the floor where she succumbed to self-pity.

One day Roman asked Jadwiga what had caused this change in their circumstances. He asked his mother if she thought it had anything to do with the time he had fought last winter with the schoolboys in the park. Jadwiga assured him that the incident had no bearing whatsoever on their current situation. Roman seemed reassured and went on his way to leave his mother alone with her thoughts. She, of course, was left to reflect upon the incident. Of the sixty thousand Jews living in Kalisz at the time, the Wisniewskis had been the only Jews living in their building. Several boys living in their building went to a private school known as the *School of the Schultz*, the only entry requirement being that the pupils must be Christians of German extraction. One day, several of these boys surrounded Roman and a few of his friends in the park, throwing snow and rocks at their victims. They had called the boys, "dirty Jews," and laughed and made threatening gestures. Roman had walked over to the circle of older boys and shoved one of them into the snow. Later, that embarrassed boy told his father that Roman had called him a "Polish Pig," and that he wanted the "little Jew" to pay for his insult. News of the incident spread through the building and the residents shunned the Wisniewskis, going so far as to put signs at their doors that read, "Here live Christians." Roman was able to prove the truth of what happened that day because the incident was witnessed by his school principle, Mr. Nowakowski, a well respected war hero who was coincidentally his father's dear friend, and so the matter was dropped. Soon the signs came down from the doors and the incident was forgotten, or so it seemed. However, incidents still occurred in the school that Roman attended. There was an anti-Semitic teacher there by the name of Mr. Wojcszewski, who hit one of the Jewish boys in the head. Roman was proud to admit that he had reported the teacher to the

principal and he knew that the principal would talk to the teacher and put an end to such improper behavior.

Another incident came to Jadwiga's mind, where once again, Roman was involved in a fight between several Christian boys and his Jewish friends. Interestingly enough, it was never Roman who was the intended target. Roman had been blessed with very blond hair and bright blue eyes, a look that was Aryan in nature. No one, not even those who were aware that Roman was a member of a Jewish family, believed he was Jewish. To outsiders, Roman represented the ideal look, and they treated him accordingly. This look would prove to be invaluable for survival during the war. In this particular instance, his looks saved him from a brutal beating. A group of Christian boys were attacking Roman's friends. When they turned to attack Roman, he stated that he was Christian and he made the Roman Catholic Sign of the Cross, and was left alone. The next time Roman was out with his friends, a larger group this time, they encountered some of those same Christian boys, but this time the Jewish boys beat the Christian boys. When one of the Christian boys asked Roman why he was doing this since he was a Christian, Roman replied, "No, I am a Jew," while delivering another blow. Jadwiga now realized that children are often the first to lose control of their emotions and fists, and that such prejudice had to start in their homes. At the time, she and Isidore, so wrapped up in their lives, had ignored the incidents. But now Jadwiga felt that the incidents were obviously a sign of things to come.

Days went by and somehow the three Wisniewskis managed to exist by just eating and sleeping. Halinka continued to complain about their situation, and almost foolishly asked Jadwiga if she and Isidore were still going to take her to the opera this year. Jadwiga was incredulous at the question, but before she scolded her daughter, she realized that Halinka was having as difficult a time dealing with their situation as she was. So, Jadwiga responded that when everything settled down, they would go to the opera in Warsaw. She then went to a case to retrieve one of the personal belongings she had packed. They were her opera glasses and Jadwiga handed them over to Halinka to admire. Halinka

smiled for the first time in days, and spun around in place. She laughed and said to Roman that she was going to the opera, but that he couldn't go. Instead, he would go to camp like he always did, since everyone knew that he was too wild to behave in such a sophisticated situation. Roman looked at his sister as though she was crazy, and opened his mouth to speak. Jadwiga sent him a sharp warning glance not to say a word to his sister. Roman remained silent, but bore a cross expression.

During this time, Jadwiga kept mostly to herself even though there were other Jewish families in the building. However, Roman and Halinka began to make friends, as children tend to do, no matter what the circumstances are. The days were long and boring and the children ran wild in and around the building, with little to occupy them now that there was no longer any schooling. Sometimes, the children would fly an old kite they had found and repaired in the big open field next to the building. Usually Jadwiga would sit outside and watch the children play and think about her home and her life before this situation.

The house she and Isidore shared with their children was huge and occupied the entire third floor of a large building. Their floor had eight large rooms, three balconies and floor to ceiling windows that were so big they were more like huge doors. The rooms themselves were so large that Isidore had to purchase a three-foot high stove that used a special imported coal to heat the rooms. The stove had two openings on the side and produced an incredible amount of heat. Besides the usual family rooms, Isidore had an office and a sample room where he kept fabrics that he sold and used in his business. There were even rooms for live-in servants, if one so desired. The Wisniewskis had three servants, but none lived with the family as they all had homes of their own. Gosposia came to the house every day, but two times a week she brought her two cousins with her to help with the cleaning chores. Jadwiga would have given anything to be back there now.

Just to have some sense of accomplishment, Roman babysat a Jewish baby that lived in the building, although rarely did the parents leave it, for fear of it's future should something happen to them.

And, as usual, Halinka found her friends among the wealthier residents, and Roman found his among the poorest. He had always had an affinity for the poor, and preferred their company to that of peers in his own upper class. Jadwiga never could understand what possessed him to run into their apartment in Kalisz, tear through the kitchen cabinets grabbing everything his little hands could hold, and run back out to distribute the food to anyone who looked like they needed it. Nor could she understand the time when they had been sailing along the Prosna River on one of their picnic excursions when Roman attempted to throw their lunch basket off the boat to a girl wading along the bank of the river. When she questioned him on his actions as Isidore removed the basket from his arms, he simply explained that the poor who lived along the river inspired him. He said that he thought the little girl was beautiful, and the way the water darkened the hem of her worn skirt as she waded in its depths fascinated him. Jadwiga thought that it wasn't much of an explanation, but for a nine year-old to be so inspired, higher forces had to be at work.

Jadwiga found it more difficult to occupy herself so easily. Her routine was the same every day; wake up, prepare a meal from their meager food supply, straighten and dust their living area, and sit and wait, praying for Isidore's safe delivery back to her. She found it difficult to establish relationships with the other tenants and so felt very lonely. But each day she put on a relaxed and confident front and each night she got the children ready and into bed, once again making sure that they were comfortable and would have no idea how she really felt. Only after the children had fallen into a deep sleep, did she break down in despair, wondering how such a short time could change the course of their lives so completely, and how she could ever feel secure again. The fact that she was separated from her husband only intensified her fears that she didn't know what

the future would bring. She was ashamed of her feelings and every night she vowed that the very next day she would force herself to exhibit a new attitude.

One night, assured that the children were sound asleep, Jadwiga decided to practice her new outlook and seek out some of her neighbors. She was hoping to find some adult conversation and also discuss any news that had come over the radio she had heard playing next door. She was so concerned about Isidore and what he might be experiencing back in Kalisz, that she almost didn't leave her rooms.

Jadwiga was pleasantly surprised at how welcoming her neighbors were. One tenant, the owner of the radio, brought Jadwiga a mug of tea and told Jadwiga that she had wanted to introduce herself many times but she felt Jadwiga had wanted to be left alone. Jadwiga admitted that it was true, and that she had several reasons for keeping to herself, but neither woman pressed the issue further. Several tenants, men and women alike, had gathered around the radio. One of the men recapped the news of the last few days for Jadwiga, bringing her up to date on the German threat to move forward with their plan of invasion. Just as Jadwiga was asking how soon Germany had plans to move ahead with their efforts, the radio reported that Germany had officially declared war on Poland, and that their invasion was imminent. All the radio listeners jumped up out of their seats when they received this news. Before they could even properly comprehend this startling information, the radio went on to say that enemy planes were now dropping bombs over Poland, leaving death and disaster in their wake.

As the radio announcer continued to report, the group clearly heard a low rhythmic droning noise in the distance. The noise got progressively louder and the small group of people realized that it was the sound of airplanes coming their way. Suddenly planes were overhead. The noise was deafening but nothing prepared the group for the first explosion followed by more and more explosions until their own building began to shake from the impacts. Jadwiga felt as though the world was coming to an end in slow motion. The room's inhabitants made

attempts at movement and uttered incoherent noises while trying to find the door. But it was as if everyone's feet were caught in glue. Finally a man opened the door and everyone poured out into the hallway. Jadwiga rushed back to her rooms at break-neck speed but before she could get there, she heard the sound of breaking glass. When she threw open the door to the children's room she saw that the windows had been shattered and that there was glass all over the floor and the beds. The thundering explosions had awakened the children, and they were dazed and confused. Jadwiga screamed at Halinka to put on her slippers while she helped Roman to do the same and then they, along with other tenants, ran to the shelter on the ground floor. Some of the people even carried a gas mask for protection against the released gas due to the explosions and resulting fires.

When they finally got down to the shelter, the feeling of slow motion had lifted and everyone was shouting and pushing and running around in terror, and without purpose. The shelter was small and looked like any other room in the apartment house except that the windows had been boarded up, or maybe there had never been windows in the first place. Jadwiga was too busy trying to prevent Roman from leaving her side to really take a good look around. Jadwiga wedged herself and the children into a corner and huddled there with her arms tightly binding Roman and Halinka to her chest. The children were staring up at her for reassurance, and Jadwiga knew she must have looked scared because Halinka began to cry. Roman squirmed in her arms and when Jadwiga loosened her grip, he extracted his arm from under hers and put it around Halinka.

Jadwiga was stunned beyond belief at the speed with which everything occurred. It was so fast, no one had time to think about anything except escape, and then in the face of their new-found safety the unthinkable happened. A bomb hit the chimney. Debris crashed all around them, right there in the shelter, and the people became even more hysterical, screaming and running in every direction. In a frenzied panic everyone charged out of the shelter as a singular mass and ran into the street. They ran with no direction so long and so fast that

they ran right out of the town, Jadwiga and her children among them. With bombs dropping all around them gouging out great holes of earth, they somehow managed to reach the next small village. The village people had heard the explosions and ran out to greet the refugees. These villagers were poor and their cottages were very small, but they accepted the newcomers with open arms and packed them tightly together into their humble abodes all the while trying to calm the frantic and terrorized strangers. Jadwiga and the two children spent the night in a shed lying on a pile of hay that had been hastily, but carefully, prepared for them. Jadwiga later heard from the owner of the barn that the first few bombs had hit a church in their village and since it was Sunday morning, the church had been full of worshipers. All had been killed.

Now, after an entire night, the bombardment stopped. At dawn the children complained of cold and hunger since they had run off without coats or food. Jadwiga didn't know for how long the bombardment would be at rest, but she decided to leave the children with their hosts and return to town for the warm clothing and food they had left in their room. The children were petrified and didn't want her to leave. Halinka started to scream and Roman desperately tried to calm her, saying that since he was unafraid, Halinka should be unafraid as well. Jadwiga later found out that it was bravado on his part, as he confessed that he was as terrified as Halinka with the thought of Jadwiga leaving them. Although she was very frightened, Jadwiga broke away from the children and set out for their rooms.

From her generous host's property, the damage to her immediate surroundings looked minimal. With the exception of the church, the little town had escaped the worst of the bombardment. Jadwiga's walk back into the village to her rooms was calm and even pleasant. Everything everywhere was deserted and only the crunching sound her feet made on the ground kept her company. Jadwiga enjoyed the moments of silence and reveled in being alone for the first time in as long as she could remember. Her pace slowed and she began to hum. It seemed as though an eternity passed before she remembered her purpose and

sped up to reach her destination. Once her purpose returned Jadwiga began to shake and her breathing became shallow. She looked over her shoulder and turned back around as quickly. The terrain was changing too. Bits of brick and wood had splintered around the outskirts of the town and large holes peppered the once beautiful landscape. Jadwiga was forced to slow her pace to circumvent the rugged obstacles that had grown larger and more plentiful. Once, after passing a particularly large pile of dirt and stone, she realized that the rubble was once a house. Bits of color peaked out from between the building materials, and Jadwiga could see the scorched remains of a blanket under a plank of wood. She was compelled to climb through the mess and lift the blanket. She screamed at the bloody bones beneath, dropped the blanket and fled over the debris, falling and picking herself up until she was free of the rubble. Up ahead she saw that the apartment building she and the children had been occupying was still standing, and she focused her eyes on the building.

From the outside, the chimney did not look as damaged as it had felt from the inside, and the memory of the explosion made Jadwiga shiver. She swallowed hard and moved to the entrance. The door to the building was wide open and Jadwiga entered cautiously. She tested the lower stair for stability and, confident in its strength, she began to climb. The place smelled of dust and her eyes felt gritty, but she pressed on toward her rooms. The door had blown off its hinges and lay across the hall against the wall, but this was the only damage Jadwiga could detect except for a lot of shattered glass from the broken windows. Jadwiga pulled the coverlet off her bed and began to dump coats and food and anything else she felt she could carry into the middle of the blanket before pulling the edges together and lugging the makeshift carryall out into the hallway. She dragged the bundle down the stairs, hoisted it up off the ground and walked through the doorway to the outside. As she was struggling to shift her bundle, voices coming from close by caught her attention.

A widow and her daughter had also returned to the town for supplies, and after the trio had introduced themselves, they set off together to return to the

homes of the kind villagers. Minutes into their journey, the three women stopped in their tracks and looked at one another as the sound of returning airplanes could be heard. The women dropped their burdens and wildly ran to some bushes in the vegetable garden. They lay flat on the ground and huddled under the branches hoping and praying not to be noticed from above. They pressed themselves into one another and lay motionless and petrified. The mother began praying to God for mercy and forgiveness for her sins, but Jadwiga was so overwhelmed that she was unable to utter a sound. The planes dropped bombs all around the town striking new and old targets and anything else in their path. Each explosion rattled her brain. The bombs came nearer, retreated, came nearer and nearer, and with each detonation, the ground trembled and more huge gaps appeared. Pieces of soil flung around and the dirt filled the air until they could barely breathe.

Jadwiga's pain and anguish was all encompassing and her fear that she would never see her children again consumed her. Her main concern was not so much for herself, but for her young son Roman. In her mind, she could hear him calling, "Mother! Mother, help me!" She could feel the mud on her face where her tears mixed with the dirt flying around her body.

Eventually the bombardment diminished, and without pause, Jadwiga leaped to her feet to rejoin her children. The widow and her daughter decided to go back into the town to search for more things in some of the deserted apartments. Jadwiga was distressed that it sounded like they were going to steal from the other homes, so after gathering her bundle, she set out on her journey alone. The planes came again, this time showering their bullets to wreak even more destruction. Jadwiga ran here and there, dropped to the ground, got up, continued on her way, dropped to the ground again, and repeated that action so many times she lost count. There were other people around now, and Jadwiga watched some of them get wounded, fall and die. Jadwiga's urge was to stop and try to help. Blood spattered into the dirt and she questioned what could she do with the bullets flying so thickly. So, she tried not to look at them and thought

only of getting back to her own children. The fear of what would happen to them without her drove her on. At one point she vomited, but she just wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and continued on.

Jadwiga's bundle of clothes and food was an unbearable burden but miraculously she arrived at the shed. Her host, who had been so kind to her family, screamed at her the minute he saw her. "How could you have burdened me with such a wild boy," he screamed, "I was hardly able to contain him." It seemed that the moment Jadwiga left, her son Roman tried to run after her, proclaiming that his father had ordered him to protect and take care of his mother. Every one around him including his sister Halinka tried to reason with him that he must wait until his mother returned. Roman couldn't be persuaded and carried on so wildly that he had to be restrained by force. Jadwiga apologized to their host offering to share with him some of her supplies, which seemed to calm him a little. Then the children spotted her and rushed out from the shed, hysterical with joy. Jadwiga pretended that there had been nothing to worry about, and she was later able to feed them and settle them back down for the night. She covered them with the coats that she had brought back, and since the children were so exhausted, they fell asleep almost immediately. Now that she had taken this risk, she was even more determined to take care of these children, no matter what she had to do.

Since the bombing had ceased once again she decided to venture back to their old rooms to collect even more things, most especially pillows. She traveled to the apartment house without incident and gathered the items she needed. Once again her arms were full and she set out to return to her children. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and as Jadwiga hurried along, she saw in the distance a figure walking toward her. She was frightened but kept walking and attempted to look casual and unconcerned. She could tell that it was a man, and as she passed him, she darted a quick glance at his face. She was astonished to see her very own husband, Isidore.

Chapter 4

Jadwiga and Isidore fell into each other's arms, hysterically laughing and at the same time crying with joy. Their emotions were too overwhelming for them to speak. So instead, they simply held and touched one another over and over again until both were satisfied that their meeting was real. As they sat down under a tree, Isidore told Jadwiga that once he got back to Kalisz he was unable to find his military unit. While searching for anyone who might know where the unit was stationed, by chance he stumbled across Jadwiga's brother Moryce Wartski and his wife Hela, who was a dentist. Following a short reunion, Isidore told them he was looking for his unit. Moryce remembered hearing that they had been mobilized to Lodz, a town located about sixty miles east of Kalisz, and that he and Hela would accompany him on the trip to Lodz if he wished to go. No sooner, however, had the three decided on that journey than Isidore heard the terrifying news that Zdunska Wola was being bombed. Isidore told Jadwiga that he went out of his mind with worry and forsaking his duty to the military, he decided not to go onto Lodz after all but to instead return to Zdunska Wola to find her and the children.

His trip from Kalisz to Zdunska Wola via foot and carriage had been uneventful. He had encountered only the remains of battles and had been in no actual danger of military attack, although the threat of attack from persons seeking to rob displaced travelers was very real. Isidore had made sure to keep himself alert and ready for anything that might happen. He told Jadwiga that the fact that he looked like a crazy man due to his worry about them probably kept everyone at a distance. But when he arrived in the town he found nothing but desolation and destruction. Both the yard and the rooms where he had left Jadwiga and the children were deserted and in disorder. He was panicked when he saw that the rooms had been emptied of most of their contents and was sure that Jadwiga had been robbed of everything they had. He called out and called out, but there was no response from anyone. He thought they were all dead.

Sobbing now and on his knees, he was stunned to feel another presence nearby. A woman appeared and she tried to explain what had happened to the people in those rooms, but he was so hysterical that it took some time before he actually listened to what the woman was explaining. At last she calmed him enough to the point where he understood her words. It turned out that she was the widow who had huddled under the bushes with Jadwiga as the bombs had fallen only hours ago. She gave Isidore directions to the village where she knew Jadwiga and the others had fled. Thus, on his way to that very village, he had met his wife who was herself returning to those deserted rooms to gather more things for the children.

Isidore and Jadwiga never stopped hugging and kissing one another, and laughing and crying while they spoke. Jadwiga then shared with Isidore her experiences until this very moment. He remained quiet as she spoke, and hugged her so hard when she had finished, that she had to gasp for breath. Together they decided to go back to the deserted rooms and gather the pillows and the remainder of the supplies for the children, and then together, they returned to the shed where she had left their sleeping children. Isidore was so overwhelmed with emotion that he had to be careful not to awaken Roman and Halinka as he leaned over them, lightly touching and kissing them, crying and laughing at the same time. His heart was filled with joy and gratitude for this reunion with his loved ones.

While their son and daughter slept, Jadwiga and Isidore spoke quietly about their plans. They decided that it was too risky to remain at their location in the village, and in the morning they would hire a wagon, collect whatever else they could gather of their things, and leave. They also decided to take with them a very religious Jewish family by the name of Lipszyts. The Lipszyts family, a mother, a father, and their several children had attached themselves to Jadwiga from the moment they arrived in this tiny village. Even Roman had become a surrogate member of their family and was playing big brother to one of the younger little girls. Jadwiga felt that there would be safety in numbers, and with

both families pooling their resources, the supplies should be adequate enough for a comfortable journey. While they were discussing the details of their plan, their daughter awakened. Halinka sat up in her bed and said she thought she heard Jadwiga talking to her father. Isidore remained silent, but had a huge smile on his face. When Halinka saw that her hearing had not deceived her, she let out a cry and leapt into Isidore's waiting arms. Awakened by Halinka's cry, Roman sat up in bed and was soon to follow Halinka's lead.

Isidore's reunion with his son and daughter was a happy occasion among all these sad occurrences, and Isidore was glad of it since his family would need to be in high spirits for what was to come. No one slept the rest of that night and after a fast breakfast at dawn, the group, including the Lipszyts, packed their meager belongings into a carriage and left the small village. Isidore decided that they should travel to Ruda Jerzewska, a small village located thirty miles away that was surrounded by a large forest and sprawling meadows. As a military man, Isidore felt that this would be a safe and protected place to stay, at least for a time. He also thought his unit might be camped around that area.

There was limited space in the wagon. No matter how they arranged or rearranged the space, not everything would fit. Isidore and Jadwiga made the agonizing decision to leave their precious fabrics behind. Isidore made the older Lipszyts couple and the younger children take places in the wagon, while all the others followed behind on foot. The trip was grueling and Jadwiga knew her feet were not up to the walk. But, she did not complain, as she wanted the children to think about their trip in the least negative light as possible. The terrain was flat for the most part, but Jadwiga bit back cries at every stone and pebble that seemed to bite right through the soles of her shoes. At one point they rested, and when Jadwiga removed a shoe to dislodge a stone, she was horrified at the blood that was all over her foot. Blisters had formed and they were raw and inflamed.

The group was slowly making their way to a place far away from the approaching Germans when they encountered a man who deliberately made fun of them. The man called them anti-Semitic names and told them that it was no

use running away as the soldiers were already occupying the area to which they were heading. Isidore was convinced that the man was lying and became very angry with him. He was about to attack the man and even pulled a gun on him, but Jadwiga held her husband back telling him in a soothing tone that fighting would only make everything worse. Anyway, they already knew that Germans had these areas surrounded. So, for Jadwiga, Isidore contained himself and the group continued on their journey, though with a reduced sense of security.

When the group reached the next village, the religious family decided to stop their journey and settle into a rather large cottage that was for rent. Isidore, Jadwiga, Helina and Roman were to travel on to Ruda Jerzewska alone. Isidore tried to convince the Lipszyts that their location was not secure, and that they would be much safer traveling with him. Mr. Lipszyt argued with Isidore and said that settling into one solid place was the surest way to avoid being noticed. He felt that it was the transient traveler going door to door begging for lodgings that would know distrust and death. There was no changing Mr. Lipszyt's mind, and so after a painstaking separation of the group's mixed belongings, Isidore and his family left to continue on to Ruda Jerzewska.

Now that they were alone, the trip became more tedious. Jadwiga settled into the carriage with the children, but no longer were there new stories to be told and learned, and the time spent parting with the other family had sapped everyone's energy. It seemed to Isidore's family that an eternity had passed before they arrived in Ruda Jerzewska. They were exhausted, both physically and mentally, and although rest and food was critical, it would not be possible to fulfill their needs until they found shelter. Isidore made his family put aside their exhaustion and focus on the search for a place to live.

Unlike the previous villagers Jadwiga had encountered, the inhabitants of this town were wary of strangers and behaved coldly. Jadwiga could not believe the way people would come to their doors and windows to stare at her family, only to turn aside when any of the Wisniewskis tried to make eye contact. Jadwiga also sensed a growing suspicion and hostility with each passing

moment. It was clear that not only were the Wisniewskis strangers to the town itself, but as time passed and they spoke to no one with familiarity, they felt the gap with the villagers widen even more. Finally someone approached the Wisniewskis, and Jadwiga was terrified that the man meant them harm. She gripped Isidore's arm and the knowledge that he held a gun concealed in his pocket did little to calm her apprehension. As the man came closer to Isidore, he spotted the miniature Polish medal of honor on Isidore's lapel, which had been awarded to him in the war. The man's face instantly softened when he saw the medal and a hand signal made to the other villagers had the same effect. Suddenly people surrounded the Wisniewski family, asking where and how Isidore had earned his medal and sharing stories of their soldiering experiences, too. They wanted to know what had brought such an honorable Polish family to their village, and what they could do to make Isidore and his family comfortable in their village. When Isidore explained that his intention was not merely to pass through, but to settle his family in the town, the villagers became ecstatic. They assisted the Wisniewskis in finding a large lovely room with kitchen privileges that was available for a reasonable rent, and even assisted them in finding food.

With many thanks, the family settled into their new quarters and in no time at all Jadwiga had arranged the room as comfortably as possible. But Isidore was restless and when he was once again sure of his family's safety, he left for the journey back to Kalisz to collect more of their fabrics. This was imperative, as Isidore sincerely believed that they could resume their manufacture of clothing accessories. He told Jadwiga that many of the employees from their factories in Kalisz were soon to be arriving in Ruda Jerzewska, and that after he had restored their business, he would continue to search for his unit. Even though she felt that Isidore's return trip to Kalisz was sure to be filled with peril, Jadwiga let him go without hysterics.

In her husband's absence Jadwiga busied herself with continually rearranging their room. She had become adept at making their spaces comfortable, and even cozy. She arranged their beds so as to maximize the area

in the room, and even afford each of them some small measure of privacy. In between the beds she stacked their suitcases and covered them with an old linen to make a table upon which she placed Halinka's tiny treasure box, her own picture of her husband in uniform, and a couple of Roman's toy soldiers that he wouldn't leave behind. Over the small cut-out that served as a window, Jadwiga placed a scrap of paper that let in sunlight, but kept the family protected from prying eyes should anyone pass by the opening. Halinka further brightened up the room by twisting some of her more colorful clothing items into a braid that she hung over the covered window.

Having satisfactorily established their quarters, Jadwiga and the children found themselves with absolutely nothing to do. Jadwiga designed a game whereby each day everyone was assigned to pick a song, a story or a poem to entertain themselves while they waited for Isidore to return. It was a peaceful way to pass time in the town and for a while they were hopeful in their new surroundings. Isidore had purchased a huge German Shepherd named Mucha before he had left the village and Roman would play with the dog constantly. He would throw pieces of wood into a pond and Mucha would fetch them. The dog would carry kosik in its mouth and catch rabbits and dig holes to hide them in. The dog was so huge that Roman would even ride him like a horse. Halinka hated the large creature, however, and because of this, the dog was forced to spend most of its time outside.

One of their neighbors downstairs had a radio that Jadwiga would often listen to. She had grown fond of her visits with the neighbor and it helped her to deal with Isidore's absence. News of the war continued to be alarming with each passing day. Jadwiga spent a lot of time running back and forth to the neighbor's room keeping the children away for fear that they would hear that the Germans had moved to the Polish border.

One day Roman begged and begged her to let him and Halinka leave their room to play outside, and while Jadwiga had second thoughts, she finally relented and let them go with their promise that they would stay together at all times. Her

worst fears were realized when Roman and Halinka heard a broadcast on the street. Roman came back very excited and repeated the broadcaster's words over and over again. Halinka on the other hand was completely silent and Jadwiga could see that her daughter was terrified.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Chapter 5

On September 1, 1939 their neighbor who owned the radio tapped on Jadwiga's door and whispered to her to come to her room at once. Jadwiga dressed and rushed to the neighbor's room. There were several other people in the small room already, some still in their night clothes and all with solemn faces. No one even looked up when Jadwiga entered as all attention was directed toward the radio. The Germans had officially declared war on Poland, and as they listened to the broadcast, all were being informed that the attack was already underway. The radio announcer said the Germans were bombing Westerplatte and Danzig and that bomb warnings were being issued for Warsaw, Krakaw, Lwow and all other major cities. Jadwiga became sick to her stomach and sat down in a chair with her head dropped into her lap. Many minutes passed before she lifted her head. Her hands and face were so wet with tears that she had to wipe them on the corner of her dress. She gathered her wits and realized that the others were all leaving the room. She wasn't sure that she could raise herself up out of the chair but she had to force herself since the neighbor wanted to be left alone with his family. Somehow she dragged herself back upstairs and when she entered the room, she asked the children to please leave her alone. Roman and Halinka sensed that Jadwiga's distress was more dramatic than usual and so the two children huddled together in a corner watching their mother's desperate attempt to cope with something they did not understand. Jadwiga, meanwhile, knew that she must figure a plan for the safety of her family, but she could come up with no idea.

So, days passed and Jadwiga settled into waiting for Isidore to return, knowing that he would know what they should do. One day a woman in the village who was a known Nazi sympathizer, reported to the German authorities already occupying this part of Poland, that Jadwiga's husband was a uniformed officer of the Polish army. Furthermore, she told the German's that Jadwiga was hiding him somewhere in the village. The next day, three Wermacht appeared at

Jadwiga's door with their guns drawn. They wanted to speak to the uniformed officer. Jadwiga calmly told them that there was no officer, and that she had no uniform in her room. The German soldiers looked Jadwiga up and down and then looked past her into the room at her son Roman. Jadwiga was dressed in a white blouse and a wide shirred skirt that was worn by all the peasants in the village and Roman was clad in his scouting uniform. Halinka was quietly sitting on a bed dressed in what looked like nightclothes and was trying to avoid making eye contact with the men. As Jadwiga stood in the doorway, her heart pounding but her expression showing calmness, the soldiers spoke amongst themselves. One of the soldiers remarked to the others that although he was told that Jadwiga and her children were Jews, he doubted it. He told one of his colleagues that the family looked just like any of the other peasants in the village and that the blond haired blue eyed boy was no Jew. The German also added that since the boy was calling the woman Mama, he knew that she, too, was not a Jew. The other soldier disagreed. He saw that the younger girl's coloring was dark and said that she looked Jewish to him. With Jadwiga still standing in the door, the three Germans continued to argue with one another about their varying definitions of what a Jew looked like. Finally, the leader of the three men decided that they should search the home just to be sure. The men brushed past Jadwiga and split up in three different directions to begin their search. No item in the room escaped their scrutiny. At one point, they came upon a locked three-foot high wicker basket that Jadwiga used to store linens. The men demanded the key to unlock the basket, accusing her of hiding the Polish officer, or at least his uniform, inside. Jadwiga was so upset by their harshness that she couldn't remember where she had put the key. While she searched for the key Roman asked the Germans if they had cub scouts in Germany. The men became angry with Jadwiga when she couldn't find the key and they lifted the basket off the floor and threw it on the bed. Roman and Halinka, who had up to this point been quietly watching the men's every move, burst out laughing. Jadwiga directed a stern look at the children, and they quieted for the moment.

The basket opened when it landed and the contents were strewn across the bed. Jadwiga reached to retrieve her cherished opera glasses and the Germans simultaneously aimed their guns at her thinking she had reached for a bomb. They were actually going to shoot the lorgnette. It was a tense moment, but then the men realized their mistake and everyone laughed. More gently now they rifled through the rest of the contents of the basket and a family album became of great interest to them. Jadwiga's heart started pounding so hard that she felt dizzy. There were many pictures of Jadwiga's husband in uniform in that album, and in one picture, Isidore was standing proudly in front of his entire platoon. One of the Germans ordered Jadwiga to identify her husband in the pictures. Fearing that the men might accidentally come across her husband and recognize him, she pointed to a short, stocky, unattractive soldier. She assured the Germans that this was indeed her husband, Isidore. Her claim amused the children immensely and Jadwiga had to give them another stern look lest they expose her lie. The Germans finally concluded their search and Jadwiga translated their conversation in her mind as they said, "even though she and the daughter have dark hair, she and the son did not look Jewish and that the daughter must have been one of those unfortunate 'coincidences'." The three men turned at several paces away from the room and saluted Jadwiga politely.

Once she was assured that they were gone, Jadwiga looked back at the picture in the photo album she still clutched and thought about her tall and handsome husband. She sighed with relief that she was able to get away with her lie and, again, fervently prayed for her husband's safe return.

Many more days passed and still Isidore did not come back to them. Jadwiga tried to keep herself busy with housekeeping and the children, but her sense of foreboding grew. Neighbors tried to console her but it was to no avail. Each night after Jadwiga put the children to sleep, she would lie awake, praying for hours for the safe return of her husband. During those nights, she also prayed for her parents. When last she heard, her parents were settled into a small, furnished room in Stawiszyn. The Germans might have penetrated that part of

the country too, and how it would affect her parents, especially her mother who suffered from a heart ailment, worried her. She knew her mother would be worried too. Jadwiga was also sad that she and her five brothers were so hopelessly separated and so completely out of touch with one another.

Jadwiga lost count of the number of days that had passed since her encounter with the three Germans, and she had about given up all hope of seeing her husband again when he finally arrived. Isidore looked like a ghost and for several hours he didn't speak but instead just sat silently, deep in thought. She could see that he was mentally and physically exhausted so she brought him food and drink and explained to the children that it was necessary to leave him alone. The children seemed to know this instinctively as they had not leapt into Isidore's arms as was their custom after long separations. Isidore did not touch the food or drink Jadwiga had put out for him and it seemed to Jadwiga that he did not even blink his eyes as he sat so quietly. After several hours had passed, he at last began to tell Jadwiga of the horrifying days he had spent since he had left his family here in this small village of Ruda Jerzewska.

Chapter 6

When Isidore returned to Kalisz to gather their fabrics, he found the town to be heavily occupied by the Germans. He had gone to their factory on the outskirts of Kalisz to collect the rest of the fabrics that they hadn't had the time, or room, to pack when they fled the town. Isidore expected to encounter danger on his trip, but he had not expected that danger to come from a source so close to his heart. One of his former neighbors, a man by the name of Miller, was a Nazi sympathizer working for the police and had decided to seize the Wisniewski's property. The neighbor had denounced Isidore to the German army command, and branded him a spy for Poland. The neighbor told the German guard to keep an eye out for Isidore, as he was sure to return to the area for his fabrics. The German command heeded the sympathizer's words, and upon his arrival in Kalisz, Miller identified Isidore who was immediately arrested and without the benefit of court or jury, was sentenced to death. Isidore was led outside his empty factory by six soldiers and was to be executed immediately. With nothing to lose, Isidore appealed to the consciences of his executioners. He told the Wermacht, the officer in charge, in perfect German, that the man who called him a spy was a common thief and that all he cared about was stealing Isidore's own property. Since he couldn't steal the property outright, he had to, "get rid of me somehow," first. The officer addressed Isidore as "you" and Isidore snapped back, "Don't call me you. I am an officer just as you are." The Germans lowered their drawn guns and looked at one another with puzzlement. Isidore remained silent, convinced that any further statement of his case would weaken it. The Germans continued to speak with one another and then shoved their guns back into their holsters. The men stayed Isidore's execution pending a confrontation with his accuser. They brought Isidore and his former neighbor together at the neighbor's home, and during this exchange the Germans came to the conclusion that Isidore was indeed innocent. The men released Isidore but ordered him to leave the town, and to never return there again. Isidore was devastated that he

couldn't collect his fabrics, but didn't dare disobey the German's orders. So he left the town without delay and made his way back to Jadwiga and the children. The couple calmed one another, secure in the fact that they were once again together, and Jadwiga was finally able to convince Isidore to take some nourishment.

Four days passed, and Isidore lay in bed exhausted and despondent. He communicated with no one, not his wife, nor his beloved children, but instead stared off into space. A few days later he began to emerge from his depression, and he even began to meet some of the villagers, but it didn't prove to be enough. Isidore was consumed with the question of how to protect his family. He didn't know where they should go or what they should do, but the one thing he did know was that they couldn't stay in this village indefinitely. The rumors about the approach of the German forces were becoming extremely frightening and Isidore heard many of these villagers discussing the subjugation of Poland. It sounded to him like it would only be a matter of days before they would no longer be safe, and without any means to make money, a journey away from the village would be all but impossible. Never a man to be lazy or idle, Isidore was unable to remain in the village without an occupation. He decided to defy the order of the Germans and once again leave his family to venture back to Kalisz. There, he might be able to come up with some type of employment that would make the Germans welcome his services, and then he could relocate his family back to their hometown. Furthermore, now that Kalisz was occupied, it would be a safer and more stable place for his family.

Once back, Isidore immediately took stock of the situation in Kalisz and for one whole week, he managed to avoid the Germans who had banished him from his hometown. He was frightened when he saw them, but either they did not recognize him or had loosened their order of banishment, because they did nothing but watch as he passed by the group on the street. More secure now, Isidore pursued every avenue he could think of for employment but was not having any success. And then at the end of that first week, any peace and

freedom that the Germans had allowed the people of Kalisz was ended with the arrival of the Gestapo and the SS For whatever reason, the influence of those two groups changed the attitudes of the German soldiers who had been occupying the town. Those soldiers were now caught up in a frenzied and vicious behavior that included regular beatings and shootings in public. The people of the town were learning quickly exactly what it meant to be under the rule of the Reich.

Meanwhile, during that week of Isidore's absence, Jadwiga was in a terrible turmoil. Unable to sit in her room she would often stand outside thinking and observing. On one of these days, twelve Polish soldiers on horseback appeared from out of the woods. Jadwiga knew that the Polish soldiers hid in the woods, but this was the first time she had seen any in person. She assumed that they were reconnaissance forces on a constant vigil to spot German soldiers. The men had come into town on horseback wearing a mismatch of Polish army uniforms and civilian clothes. Jadwiga observed that although their clothes were mismatched, the men were clean and well kept. She wondered how that was possible since they spent so much time in the woods. Jadwiga offered the men food and milk, but the soldiers acted suspicious and refused her generosity in a rough manner. Jadwiga intended to warn them of the radio's reports of the German army's approach, but the group turned and galloped back into the woods before she could share the news. A couple of days passed after her encounter with the men and to Jadwiga's amazement, the same group of soldiers returned to the village again. This time, however, they were in a deplorable condition. The men were dirty and their clothes were torn. They looked like they were also badly in need of medical attention. The soldiers had clashed with German forces right there in those very woods surrounding the village. The Polish soldiers had been overcome and were forced to capitulate to the Germans. The poor soldiers shed their uniforms and ran back to the village, exhausted and hungry. While all of this confusion was taking place, Isidore also appeared, and he too was in great distress. "You and the children must return with me to Kalisz immediately," he

informed Jadwiga with urgency. “It is just too dangerous for you to stay here any longer.” So, after a month and a half of peace, the Wisniewskis were forced to move on again.

Chapter 7

They gathered their belongings quickly, and began the return journey to Kalisz. They never discussed the details of the situation in front of the children, and Isidore asked the children to simply do as they were told. While in Kalisz, Isidore discovered that his Fiat was missing so he had obtained a slow truck to move their belongings. The trip took the family five or six days. Their old apartment, still intact, was waiting when they arrived but, unfortunately, it was not as they had left it. Everything in their home was in terrible disarray, and most items were unrecognizable. The Germans had been occupying the house for some time and most of Jadwiga and Isidore's furniture had been removed. Isidore discovered from a neighbor that it had been distributed to other German occupied apartments. They also found that their Talis, the praying shawl, had been used as a tablecloth. Although the integrity of the cloth remained strong, the cloth was so badly stained with food and drink, that Jadwiga did not have much hope for its future. Jadwiga was delighted to find, however, that Isidore's portrait while dressed in his polish uniform, was untouched and had been left in the drawer of their now broken desk. Isidore surmised that the soldiers staying there must have retained some measure of respect for the man in uniform.

Their excitement at being in familiar surroundings was tempered by a sobering thought. The building next to theirs had become the Gestapo headquarters. They also heard that the Germans had decreed that no item was to be moved or removed to other locations than where it currently resided, so trying to find furniture to replenish what they had lost would be impossible.

They were starving, but like their furnishings, all of their food supplies were gone. Many thorough searches were made, but they were still unable to find any food or recover all their hidden personal belongings. Jadwiga told Isidore that she was going to see if Gosposia was in her apartment and if she might be able to help them find food.

Gosposia was indeed in her old apartment and was so happy to be a part of the family again that she was willing to do just about anything to help. Together, the women gathered a basket of food and supplies and set off for Jadwiga's apartment, chatting as though nothing had ever been wrong. After a tearful reunion and after everyone had been fed, the women cleaned the house thoroughly. Gosposia asked after the health of Jadwiga's parents and if they were still in Kalisz. Jadwiga told her that her parents were to be returning to Kalisz very soon, and Gosposia suggested that they ready Jadwiga's parent's apartment also. Jadwiga thought that idea was splendid, and so they opened the door to her parents old home.

They were devastated with what they saw when they opened the door. The damage was far worse than what they found in their own apartment. Little of Benzion and Rachel's furniture had been removed, but rather it had been smashed. The prayer books were destroyed or desecrated, some violently torn to shreds with their pages found strewn throughout the apartment and found in odd places. It was as though a wild animal had run loose in the apartment. The women worked diligently all day and some of the night, trying to ready the apartment so that Jadwiga could make her parents feel at home. Gosposia and Jadwiga risked their lives more than once by moving found objects into the apartment to fashion tables and chairs and moving some items from Gosposia's own home to enhance the apartment. At last Jadwiga was ready to collect her parents from Stawiszyn.

Jadwiga did not know why her parents had elected to go to Stawiszyn in the first place, but then Benzion and Rachel always did exactly what suited them for their own reasons.

Following his retirement as a salesman for Saurer of Switzerland, a position Benzion had taken after he lost his mail delivery business many years past, Jadwiga's parent's enjoyed a very busy life and Benzion did not miss selling the embroidery equipment that Saurer of Switzerland produced. Benzion and Rachel were deeply religious, educated, and refined people, and kept their home

according to Jewish law. Benzion spoke four languages fluently, and as a *Kahanin*, or priest, from one of the remaining tribes of the twelve tribes of Israel, he was able to bless people. Following his retirement he continued to be involved in affairs of the temple and the Jewish community, and was elected as the vice president of the Jewish Home of the Aged. Jadwiga was very proud of her parents and was thankful that her husband loved and respected them, so much so that he very generously helped them financially when they were in need.

Although her goal was to bring them back to Kalisz immediately and settle them into their own apartment, Jadwiga was alarmed to find that her mother was very ill and had taken to her bed. Rachel's appearance frightened Jadwiga, but her joy upon seeing her parents, and theirs at seeing her was incredibly uplifting since they had lost all hope of ever being reunited with each other.

Although Jadwiga recognized that her mother was dreadfully ill, she nevertheless convinced them to return to Kalisz with her. Rachel argued, pleading bad health, but Jadwiga said she could take care of them better if they were close by. Rachel reluctantly agreed and Jadwiga took little time in dressing her mother and packing the few belongings her parents had in the small apartment. Jadwiga then had her parent's wait for her until she returned with a horse drawn wagon that was the only source of transportation available to them.

Jadwiga loaded the wagon with her parent's bundles, and had her parents sit atop them, while she sat next to the driver. The ride was bumpy and uneven and Jadwiga's parents were terribly uncomfortable during the journey but did their best not to show it. The trip was endless, and they even had to weather a terrible rainstorm, but at last they reached the outskirts of Kalisz. Jadwiga's mother asked if she could visit their former housekeeper who lived in that area, but Jadwiga was afraid to stop the wagon. She told her parents that they must continue on until they reached their apartment, and all social visits could be made later, after they were all settled.

Upon their arrival, Jadwiga found that her parent's apartment, the very one that she and Gosposia had so meticulously cleaned, was occupied by the

daughter of the building superintendent. There was a heated argument between the woman and Jadwiga but the woman refused to vacate. Jadwiga rushed over to the city hall and although she was shuffled from one office to another, she stumbled upon an official who was sympathetic to her complaint. The official accompanied Jadwiga to the apartment to settle the dispute, and fortunately for Jadwiga's family, he concluded that Jadwiga's parents had a right to live there. He then proceeded to evict the obnoxious woman who gathered her personal belongings under protest. The unwanted tenant looked Jadwiga in the eyes as she dragged her belongings through the door, but said nothing to Jadwiga or the official. Several paces away from the door, the woman turned and made a rude gesture at Jadwiga. Jadwiga was frightened by this encounter, afraid that the woman would retaliate, but the woman left the building quietly. Jadwiga and Isidore thanked the official for his intervention, and Jadwiga introduced him to her grateful parents, who had been waiting outside. The official said that it had been a pleasure helping such a kind and generous woman, and he seemed touched by Jadwiga's introduction to her parents. The truth was that Jadwiga wanted to spend as much time with the official as possible, lest the evicted woman was loitering to cause trouble. After the official was well on his way, Jadwiga and Isidore unloaded the wagon while her parents reunited with the children. Roman pulled Jadwiga aside and asked why his grandmother looked so frail, but Jadwiga asked him to push his concerns aside and instead help Isidore settle the old couple back into their old home. Jadwiga and Isidore then managed to get Rachel into bed, which was no small feat, as Rachel did not want to miss directing the set up of her apartment. No matter where Jadwiga and Isidore placed Rachel's items, Rachel wanted to have them placed somewhere else. Jadwiga finally lost her patience and ordered her mother into bed. Once Rachel was settled, and Jadwiga was assured that her mother was too tired to rise from her position, she unpacked the rest of her parent's belongings and arranged them neatly. Jadwiga considered borrowing some more furniture from an unoccupied apartment, but Jadwiga's mother heard her daughter's idea and put her foot

down. Rachel said absolutely not, and that whatever they had now, at least it was theirs, and they would just have to be satisfied with it. Jadwiga was quietly amused that not all the furniture had actually been theirs, but with the blanket acting like a tablecloth covering the borrowed table, and the bed linens hiding evidence of the borrowed mattress, Jadwiga declined to reveal the truth. Not until her parents were completely settled and her mother had fallen asleep did Jadwiga return to her own apartment.

Every morning thereafter, Jadwiga visited her parents. She brought them simple but nourishing food and tried to attend to all of their other needs. Jadwiga had never had to care for the infirm before, and she was not sure how her father had cared for her mother while they had been alone in that place in Stawiszyn. And, now that Jadwiga was close-by, her father was more than happy to relinquish his caretaker duties and bury himself in the religious books he had been so carefully protecting from damage. Isidore, too, was no help to Jadwiga when it came to her parents care as he was busy trying to find some means with which to make money. Although the situation was difficult, Jadwiga tried to carry on as if everything was normal and three exhausting weeks passed without event.

On the morning of the forth week, Jadwiga arrived to attend to her parents and found that her mother was out of bed and in a wonderful mood. Glogowska, her mother's former housekeeper, had come to pay Rachel a visit. Glogowska rose from her seat at the table and tearfully embraced Jadwiga. "Gracious," she said looking at Jadwiga's face, "how you are such a beautiful woman. Even now, so tired, but still so beautiful." The compliment brought tears to Jadwiga's eyes and she looked for a place to sit down at the table. Unfortunately, all the chairs had been removed from the apartment and Jadwiga was only able to retrieve two of the chairs from a junk pile in the basement of the building. Glogowska told Jadwiga to take her seat, and she would sit on the travel chest. Jadwiga almost laughed aloud when Glogowska noted with such a horrified tone that most of the furniture was gone. Jadwiga wondered where the woman had been for the last

several months. Her careless comment really annoyed Jadwiga. After all, she lived virtually next door to the apartment building. Didn't she see what was being removed from it? Jadwiga's mother was less concerned and reminded Glogowska that this was the same situation that they were in 1914 during the First World War. Rachel asked Jadwiga if she remembered that time and Jadwiga smiled at her mother, knowing Rachel wasn't asking because she wanted an answer. Rachel talked about those times in WWI when she and Benzion lost everything and had to build their world up again when the war was over. Rachel frightened Jadwiga when she stated that she wasn't strong enough to live through it a second time, but then she reached across the table for Jadwiga's hand and said she could bear it because she knew she was not alone.

The women visited for quite a while and then the time came for Glogowska to leave. The women embraced lovingly, and all cried bitterly for the past and the present, knowing they might never see each other again. Jadwiga scolded her mother for becoming so upset about things over which she had no control and Jadwiga was afraid that this excitement and concern of Rachel's would undermine her already poor health. But, her mother was energized and actually busied herself in the kitchen making dinner. She did not allow Jadwiga to help her, but rather encouraged Jadwiga to go back to her own family and attend to them assuring Jadwiga that she would be fine.

Jadwiga helped her mother clean up the table and as she was preparing to leave they heard a knock at her mother's door. There stood Isidore. He had missed everyone and had simply come for a visit. Isidore sat down on the travel chest and stayed for quite a while giving Jadwiga's mother the news of the situation around them. But, it soon became apparent that Rachel was distracted and not listening to Isidore, so he stopped talking and asked Jadwiga if she was ready to return to their own home. As Isidore and Jadwiga were preparing to leave, Rachel asked Jadwiga to please stay a few more minutes. Isidore said goodbye to his mother-in-law then Rachel took Jadwiga into the bedroom. Pulling out a box from a hiding place under the bed, she showed Jadwiga where she had

been keeping her jewelry. She wanted Jadwiga to know its location since no one could predict what the future would bring. Jadwiga covered her ears. She didn't want to think about her parents not being in her life. Rachel continued speaking and Jadwiga could see that her mother was becoming frustrated with her refusal to face the reality of the situation. Rachel pulled weakly on Jadwiga's arms, and scolded Jadwiga when her hands came away from her ears. Rachel reminded her that war was not a time for avoidance of uncomfortable thoughts. Jadwiga was embarrassed and listened quietly and respectfully to her mother's instructions.

The next morning as Jadwiga was once again getting ready to visit her parents, Jadwiga's cousin, Koninski, came to pay her a visit. As a Jew, he had been kicked out of Berlin two years ago in 1938, and was now residing in a town named Zbaszyn. Jadwiga was delighted to see him, but recognized immediately from the expression on his face that there was trouble. He refused to come in to the apartment and impatiently waited for Jadwiga to get her coat and go with him to her mother's apartment. Upon arrival, Jadwiga saw and greeted her sister-in-law, Hela, the dentist, along with two other strange women who were hovering over Rachel. Rachel was lying on the couch that Jadwiga and Gosposia had so carefully cleaned the dust from. Rachel was lying there with her arms folded neatly on her chest, and her legs straight underneath the blanket. Jadwiga's first thought was that her mother looked strange in that rigid position, and then she realized that her mother was not moving. Hela saw the realization dawn on Jadwiga and prevented her from going to her mother. Jadwiga struggled with her sister-in-law who was trying to embrace Jadwiga and telling her that she was so sorry that her mother was gone. Jadwiga was unable to be consoled. She allowed herself a full hour of hysterical grief before she pulled her emotions together under a veneer of control and then immediately began to make the funeral arrangements. Jadwiga did not accept any help with this task. If she could not grieve properly for her mother, then at least she could make sure her mother's funeral was carefully undertaken.

Making the arrangements was an almost impossible task because of the unfriendly attitude of the Germans to the Polish Jews. The Germans were becoming more violent every day, beating people in the street and hauling them away from their homes and families with no apparent cause. Those people were never to be seen again. Jadwiga, Isidore, Halinka and Roman, along with Jadwiga's brother Moryce and his wife Hela, were fearful that the funeral proceedings would draw attention to the family and that they too would be attacked. So the family decided to travel to the cemetery in a carriage while hiding the body underneath a blanket. Once they arrived at the cemetery, a group of religious Jews who were members of the *Katchal*, or burying society met the carriage. Rachel's body was buried in a grave in accordance with the Jewish religion. The grief of the family was deep, and was made even more so because of the absence of Jadwiga's other brothers whose whereabouts were unknown. Jadwiga's depression was deeper than everyone else's, but she knew she would have to cope and move on since she could not neglect her own family. Her father, too, was now alone, and had also become very ill, possibly with angina pectoris. Jadwiga's tears were bubbling up and it became so difficult to hold in her grief that she actually strained a muscle in her throat trying to hold it all in. Jadwiga did not know how she was going to manage.

But, she did manage and she visited her father everyday to attend to his needs. After cooking, cleaning and visiting with Benzion, she returned to her own family to attend to their needs. Jadwiga was exhausted and her hands were raw from the daily laundry she scrubbed by hand. Just once she wished she could forego the laundry, but there were so few outfits left for everyone, keeping up with the dirty items would be impossible. Jadwiga asked Halinka to help with the laundry duties, but her daughter was not strong enough to do the job properly, particularly when it came to Roman's clothes. Somehow that boy managed to find the toughest dirt in the village, in spite of Jadwiga's begging that he be careful.

Roman, meanwhile, showed no fear for anything that was going on around him. He was outside more than he was in, and he continued playing with his old friends as though nothing was, or ever had been, amiss. Isidore and Jadwiga still did not discuss the dire situation in front of the children and as a result, Jadwiga was constantly frightened for her son's safety. She feared that Roman was in danger by not understanding what was really going on around him, but Isidore assured her that with his Aryan coloring, there was nothing to fear. Besides, the more normally he behaved, the less likely he was to draw attention to himself. Jadwiga did not disagree with Isidore's reasoning, but it did not make her feel more comfortable with Roman's safety.

To further complicate matters, soon after they occupied Kalisz, the Germans had put an end to all the work being done in the factories. They had dismantled the machinery and sold it off in pieces, shipping some back to Germany and selling the rest to non-Jewish buyers. For the Wisniewskis, this dismantling meant a scarce opportunity existed to find work. When the young Roman discovered this news after asking his father why he was not working, he became incensed. He could not understand why the Germans would dismantle such profitable operations, and Isidore could not properly explain it without revealing the truth. Furthermore, Roman was confused by the attitudes of the Poles themselves since they had returned to their home. He had heard that the Germans were the enemy and that he should avoid them at all costs, but many of the Germans were very nice and as far as Roman could tell, it was the Poles who were brutal. It seemed like every day the Poles were turning in the Jews to the Gestapo. In most cases, they also abused the Jews, throwing rocks and dirt at them as they passed on the street. Even the priests in the churches would participate. The priests justified their position by stating that it was a religious issue as the Jews killed Christ.

At one point, an acquaintance came by to pick up the belongings that he had left with Isidore before the war. These belongings had been well hidden in the walls of the apartment. When they had returned home, Isidore had pulled the

man's package out of the wall along with some of the Wisniewski's own items. Although the items were accessible, Isidore was reluctant to give them up because the Germans had decreed that no one, most especially the Jews, were allowed to move anything, anywhere. The man did not care about the warning and demanded his belongings. Isidore had no choice but to give the man his possessions. When the Germans stopped the bundle laden man right outside of the apartment, the man told the soldiers from where he had come, and pointed to Isidore who was watching the exchange from a window. Isidore told Jadwiga not to be concerned about the man and his bundles, and went on to tell her that he must leave for a while to attend to some important matters. Not long after Isidore left, while Jadwiga and Gosposia were sorting items, the door to the apartment was savagely kicked open and a Gestapo agent by the name of Miling marched into the apartment. Miling was a disgusting looking man with a huge scar on his cheek that ran diagonal all the way down to his neck. Jadwiga cringed, more from his appearance than from her fear of what was to come.

Miling was beside himself with anger and stated that he wanted keys to the locked storeroom in the apartment. Miling cursed at Jadwiga and viciously shoved her into the wall. Gosposia, meanwhile was sick with fear and had crouched into a corner. Then Miling tore around the apartment shouting about where the keys might be and throwing everything he came in contact with all over. After several minutes of this tirade, Miling ordered Jadwiga to pick up spools of silk thread that he had strewn about the floor in his rage. He gave her five minutes to clean up the room, but she failed to complete the task in the allotted time. Miling beat and kicked her, screaming and cursing all the while. The beating lasted for several minutes and when his frustration was spent, he left Jadwiga, injured, lying on the floor, and left the apartment abruptly slamming the door. His assistant had been in the hallway while all this was taking place and he must have felt sorry for Jadwiga. He entered the apartment quietly and he stooped and began throwing the silk spools of thread back into the trunk from where they had fallen. The assistant tried to help Jadwiga off the floor so she

could continue to clean up the mess, and he whispered to Jadwiga that he was sorry that his superior had abused her. By the time the official returned, smelling of smoke, Jadwiga and the assistant had the room back to normal. Miling once again demanded the key to the office and storeroom, and Jadwiga was terrified, as she had to tell the officer that her husband always took the keys with him when he left the house. The officer flew into another rage and kicked and beat Jadwiga again. Finally he dragged her out of the house by her hair and ordered her to find her husband and return with the keys. Jadwiga was bleeding from her nose, mouth and ears and there was pain in her abdominal area. She tried to raise herself from the ground, but every time she did she would fall back down. At one point she passed out and when she came to, the official was standing over her with his foot pressing into her stomach. He screamed at her that he would kill her right there if she didn't get up and find her husband. She couldn't get up and so she crawled along the street, bloodying her hands and knees. Finally someone came out of a doorway and helped her up onto her unsteady feet. Blood was all over Jadwiga and the man tried to wipe at her, but she pushed him away and continued on her journey. Miraculously, she found Isidore and told him what had happened. There was no sign of the officer, so she warned Isidore not to return to the house, but Isidore ran off immediately, screaming that he would kill the official for what he had done to Jadwiga. Jadwiga dropped to the ground crying. When she pulled herself up again and finally arrived back to her apartment, the officer had already beaten Isidore and left him lying unconscious and bloody at the entry door. Jadwiga fell down next to her husband, and gently touched him to try and rouse him. The official had obviously gotten the keys to the storeroom, as the door was now wide open, and Jadwiga could see the Miling trying to open a large trunk in the middle of the room. The officer was screaming for Isidore, who had regained consciousness, to bring the large trunk into the main room. Isidore was just coming to and didn't understand what was happening. Isidore didn't respond to the shouted orders of the official and so Miling ran over to Isidore and kicked him while in full running motion. Jadwiga's husband let out a pained yelp

and the official grabbed his whip and mercilessly lashed it upon Isidore. Jadwiga was still crouched on the floor over her husband and when the lashes started falling she tried to crawl away from the whip, tugging on Isidore's sleeve for him to come also. It was a useless gesture as Isidore had passed out again. When the German saw what she was doing, he set the whip on her with a vengeance. There was blood on the floor and splattered on the walls, and Jadwiga knew that she was going to add to the mess with her own vomit. When she became sick, the German smiled and with a feral expression, pulled his gun out to shoot them. The German's assistant, who had been so kind to Jadwiga, came close to the official and whispered something to him. Whatever the assistant said made the official return his gun to its holster and then drag Isidor to his feet. Miling informed Jadwiga that Isidore was being taken to jail. The kindly assistant said nothing, nor did he try to help Jadwiga and Isidore, but went about locking all the doors once again. Once that task was completed, Miling, his assistant and Isidore left for the jail. As he was the last one out the door, the assistant whispered to Jadwiga that they were not to remove anything from the rooms and told her that German families were being moved in. As soon as the officials were well out of earshot, Jadwiga's housekeeper gave rise to her rage. She swore and cursed them, and then with a rage induced speed, Gosposia gathered up clothes and the other items they would need to pack before evacuating the apartment. Jadwiga was unable to help and just stayed on the floor until Gosposia had collected their possessions. The dear housekeeper then filled a basin with water and cleaned Jadwiga as best she could. Once at the jail and in the presence of some men who not only respected Isidore but also were his friends, Isidore was once again released from his torture and returned to his home, bloody and injured, but alive. The three had to sit at the table for a while before Jadwiga and Isidore had gained back enough strength to move, and only then was Isidore able to go out in search of a wagon. They were running out of time to move and by the time Isidore returned, a German soldier had already arrived to oversee their move. Jadwiga forced herself to help with the loading of their possessions into

the wagon to speed the process. They proceeded to city hall with Jadwiga sitting on their possessions in the wagon, and both Jadwiga and Isidore bleeding from their stinging open wounds. The two were thankful that both the children were with Benzion while this occurred.

When they arrived at city hall, they expected a new apartment to be allocated to them since the Germans had requisitioned their own apartment. Amazingly, and without any problem, they were assigned an apartment in a house on Stawiszynska St. located on the outskirts of town. Coincidentally, this house belonged to a Christian family by the name of Rzyzniewski who were very close friends of Jadwiga's parents. Jadwiga knew a moment of joy at their newest assignment. She had been to the Rzyniewski home on several occasions and knew it to be spacious and beautiful. When the Wisniewskis arrived at their new home, there was no one to greet them. Isidore quietly asked Jadwiga if she thought the Rzyniewskis were no longer in residence but Jadwiga did not answer because she was afraid to think about it. The front door to the home was not locked, so Jadwiga and Isidore entered, located their rooms, brought in the few bags they had salvaged from their last home and flopped onto one of the beds in total exhaustion. Isidore commented on the size of the apartment and before he fell into a deep sleep, suggested that Jadwiga have Benzion come to live with them here. Jadwiga agreed.

The Wisniewski family's two rooms were spacious and well furnished. Three large beds occupied the two rooms, while a full kitchen complete with dining table and chairs occupied the other. There was, however, no bathroom. For that a shared room down the hall was to be used. In spite of it all, Jadwiga was so happy with the arrangement that she pulled herself out of bed, woke Isidore, and asked if they could bring her father to live with them right that very instant. Isidore agreed and they traveled the short distance to her father's apartment to collect him and the children, hiring a wagon along the way.

Benzion was pleased that his family wanted to settle him into one of the rooms in their new home. It was the Sabbath, and although Jadwiga's father was

a deeply religious man, he did help Jadwiga and Isidore pack his belongings into suitcases, but he did not assist in loading the wagon, nor did he ride in it. So, risking being targeted out as Jews by their refusal to ride in a moving vehicle on the Sabbath, all three followed the wagon on foot. By now, Jadwiga was in agony and she could tell by the look on Isidore's face that he too was uncomfortable, but they continued on. When Roman and Halinka asked what was wrong with Jadwiga and Isidore, Isidore told them that there had been a scuffle with a German, but that everything was fine. Settling her father now, while they, too, had to settle, would be easier than doing it later. Jadwiga decided to settle Benzion in the bedroom and he could share that space with Roman. She and Isidore would share the kitchen with Halinka, and since Jadwiga had an inkling that Isidore would leave once again to gain revenge on the Germans, she was comfortable that this arrangement would work out well.

Chapter 9

Several days passed and there was much talk about relocating to Russia. Benzion refused to consider the idea. No matter how Jadwiga and Isidore pleaded for Benzion to understand the seriousness of their situation, he stood firm in his stubbornness to stay in Poland. Isidore privately asked Jadwiga to ready the children for their relocation to Russia, but Jadwiga would absolutely not hear of leaving her father alone. Isidore continued to try to convince both his wife and father-in-law that Russia was safer for them, and although he had fought bitterly against the Russians in his military service, he knew there was safety and protection to be had there. Jadwiga and Benzion would not hear of leaving. After several days, the matter was settled and left quiet.

Gosposia, too, had come to live in these rooms with the Wisniewski family after her own apartment had been requisitioned. She slept in the kitchen on a plain folding bed that, when folded, tucked neatly under the kitchen table. It was dreadfully uncomfortable and every morning she awoke with a new ache. But Gosposia never complained. She was just so happy to be with the family and have a comfortable roof over her head. So many of the people they knew, whether Jewish or Christian, were being forced out of their homes, systematically, street by street. The Germans would rush into the desired apartments, abuse the occupants unmercifully, and then drive them out of their rooms with few possessions or clothes. Most of the Jewish families ended up in the cellars at city hall where upon official orders from Mayor Grabowski, they had to undress and were thoroughly searched for money and valuables. The search was not only humiliating but also painful as the people were flogged unmercifully during this process. After being thoroughly searched, the displaced persons were directed to various schools, churches, synagogues, and marketplaces to find living space. Every building was overflowing, dirty and stinking, but still more and more people came. They jammed themselves into every space imaginable, some sleeping in bathtubs and others curling their children in sinks and on closet shelves.

Among those relocated to these living quarters, were Jadwiga's cousins, the Koninskis, their friends, the Friedlanders, and Jadwiga's brother Moryce and his wife Hela. Hela brought few possessions besides the clothes on her back and an extensive first aid kit. The Koninskis, Friedlanders and Hela and Moryce were all resettled in the marketplace center, and Hela's first aid kit proved to be invaluable in healing the many wounded and nursing the sick. Hela was kind and patient, and she worked hard to comfort the scared, distraught and unhappy people even though her life was just as miserable and unhappy.

Hela could not believe her eyes every morning when she opened them. More and more people were being packed into the marketplace by day and by night, bleeding from beatings and suffering from broken bones and teeth. More and more people every day, and Hela was choking from the smell and lack of fresh air. When she was sure she couldn't possibly survive another day, she and Moryce were transferred to another relocation center in what was once a cloister on Stawiszynska Street. Hela continued her role as nurse to the tenants and provided what comfort she could to those around her.

Jadwiga and her family, meanwhile, remained in their new quarters. Jadwiga knew that she was fortunate in that they were allowed to remain in these rooms, and it seemed that the relocations were not being concentrated in their area. She felt guilty that her brother and sister-in-law were less fortunate than she, but she had no way to sneak Hela and Moryce out of the guarded center. So Jadwiga and Gosposia devised a plan where they could smuggle food to her brother and sister-in-law three times a day. Hela would take small amounts for Moryce and herself and then distribute the rest to the most needy people in the center. Jadwiga's visit was a risky proposition that brought with it a death sentence if she were to be caught and she had to be extremely careful when she handed the food over to Hela every day. The entrances at the cloister were guarded by German military police and if they knew food was being smuggled inside, they would have confiscated it and punished all parties involved.

Jadwiga was feeling particularly nervous one day and saw that a familiar guard was standing alone at the entrance. She approached the guard and requested that he let her go inside to visit with a good friend and bring her a little food. Amazingly enough, and going against his orders, the German guard allowed her to enter. He did not ask anything of Jadwiga, nor did he demand that she follow any rules once inside. He simply told her that he could not bear to see all of these poor unfortunate people suffering so. He knew that they had not committed crimes, and he couldn't understand why these people had to be guarded in the first place. His attitude amazed Jadwiga and she sincerely thanked him for his kindness. Jadwiga touched his arm in a gesture of thanks as she slipped through the entrance and the soldier told her she best hurry so that no one detected that he had disobeyed his orders. Jadwiga sped up her steps and as soon as she was completely inside, the soldier stepped in front of the entrance to block the view.

Jadwiga's progress was excruciatingly slow due to the hundreds upon hundreds of people crowded into the tiny cells in the center. Jadwiga looked left and right and up and down over the crowds and after fifteen minutes, she became panicked that she would never find Hela. Jadwiga asked a number of people if they had seen her sister-in-law but those who were not too listless or ill to answer her had not seen Hela. Jadwiga made another thorough search for her sister-in-law, but it was to no avail. She began to fear that Hela had fallen ill or been relocated without being able to get word to Jadwiga and Isidore when she heard Hela's voice. The woman was telling jokes and funny stories to a group of dispirited and sad people who were crowded together on the floor in one of the cells. Hela looked quite content as she sat among these people, and her content turned to delight when she saw Jadwiga inside of the cloister. Immediately, Hela took Jadwiga to Moryce so that they could discuss everything that had been happening on the outside.

But first, Hela and Moryce told Jadwiga what had been going on in their 'prison'. Mayor Grabowski made regular visits, and on one visit he made some of

the Jewish men do lowly work for a Catholic priest. On another of his inspections, he had all the straw on which the people slept removed and thrown out. He screamed at them that they were cursed Jews, and only deserved to sleep on bare floors. Hela and Moryce's stories were endless, all focused on pain, humiliation, discomfort, sickness and death. Hela further explained that there was a shortage of water, and people went without baths for weeks on end. The filth and vermin was spreading an epidemic of disease.

Jadwiga had stopped listening to Hela's tales of other inmates and was instead focused on the deteriorating appearance of Hela. Hela looked awful. She had lost so much weight that her skin no longer fit tightly over her jaw, and she was so filthy that Jadwiga was sure she would have to shave her head bald to untangle her hair. Jadwiga went to the kindly guard that she had spoken with earlier, and asked that Hela be allowed to leave to take a bath. The guard once again disobeyed his orders and gave his permission, but forcefully made her promise to return before Hela's absence was noticed by anyone else. Jadwiga gave the guard her word and then took Hela to the apartment. Jadwiga was nervous about returning Hela to the cloister as soon as possible, but it had been so long since Hela had used the muscles in her legs for walking faster than a shuffle, their progress was slow. Jadwiga entered the apartment first, followed by Hela who had become so thin that Jadwiga's body completely hid Hela from view. Benzion, who had been sitting at the table reading, did not see Hela until she stepped away from Jadwiga. When Jadwiga's father saw Hela he embraced her but was openly shocked by her appearance. He became so emotional about how his family had to live, that he collapsed and had to be helped to his bed. Jadwiga then assisted Hela with her bath, and provided a clean change of clothes. Hela returned to the cloister without delay, stronger in body and soul.

Weeks passed and Jadwiga continued to smuggle food to the cloister. Whenever she was able, by permission from her kind guard, she entered the cloister and visited with her brother and sister-in-law. This routine continued until Kalisz was designated as part of the German Reich, and the Germans began to

send inmates of the resettlement centers to Lodz, Warsaw, Czestochowa, Kielce, and other large areas of the country. The indignities that the people had to suffer were worse than ever although the reports from the camps were rare. One such report said that women were forced to undress completely, and were then searched internally for jewelry before being shoved into freight trains so tightly that many were unable to breathe. Almost two-hundred people were jammed against one another into each car, and then as people would faint from lack of breath, more people would be shoved in on top of their prone bodies. This in turn scared the children, and they would scream and cry, thus creating even more chaos and causing the Germans to be even more abusive.

When Jadwiga heard that the cloister was being evacuated, she gathered as much food as she could and rushed to the cloister, hoping to get the food to Hela and Moryce before they were sent to one of these unknown places. When Jadwiga arrived, she could see many of the inmates through the barbed wire that surrounded the cloister. They were standing in rows, some with puny bundles, some without anything. The military police surrounded the group, and Jadwiga could not get near the entrance. She recognized her brother in the distance, and waved at him until she caught his attention. Moryce and Hela worked their way out of the line, and settled themselves into a place where Jadwiga could hand them the food she had brought. The body searches had already taken place, and the general confusion of the relocation kept the police from noticing the exchange. Once the package was securely hidden in Moryce's arm, Jadwiga let herself lose control and cried bitterly. They knew they would never see each other again as people did not come back for visits once they left on the trains. There was no way for them to say goodbye to each other since the German soldiers were screaming at the crowds to get moving, and had noticed Moryce out of the line. One of the guards ordered Moryce and Hela to get back into their line and Jadwiga watched this entire process, ill and broken. And then they were all gone.

Chapter 10

Isidore and Benzion were talking at length about the deportation situation when Jadwiga returned home. They had heard that the Germans didn't evacuate the old, sick or helpless, but rather just eliminated them due to a lack of accommodations. Jadwiga's father, who for years was a very active leader in the Home for the Jewish Aged, asked his son-in-law to replace him in this leadership capacity. He felt that the Jewish people would need a leader they could look up to, now more than ever. Benzion said the leader had to be strong and young, and that he himself was simply too old and too tired to contribute. The two men knew that the home could not house the number of old people targeted for elimination by the Germans, so Benzion and Isidore devised a plan to prepare more beds in the already overcrowded facility.

The very next day Isidore and Jadwiga, along with several other men, began a project to build beds out of boards salvaged from scrap heaps. They placed the make shift cots in and around the already crowded Home for the Aged arranging and rearranging the rooms to maximize space. The conditions in the home went from awful to unbearable, as there were no doctors or volunteers to care for the people. Worse, space was completely occupied and there was no adequate ventilation. Jadwiga wondered how much good they were actually providing to these poor people, but Isidore said that life would always be more valuable than comfort.

Her question was answered soon enough, however, when Mayor Grabowski ordered that all "useless" people were to be taken from the foul home and sent out of the city without delay. Hours after his announcement, soldiers surrounded the Home for The Aged, and organized an evacuation identical to that of the cloister. This evacuation process was to be repeated many times over the next few weeks, for as quickly as the "useless" people were removed, more people came into the home. Jadwiga's cousins, Jacob and Leosia Koninski, were among those who were transferred into the home from the relocation center at

Market Hall. The Jewish Hospital on Chopen Street was also a location that had been chosen to transfer some of the older people. Jadwiga did not know why the German's bothered transferring these people back and forth, because most were branded as "useless" and transferred out of the city altogether. Jadwiga stayed busy by helping those to be relocated to pack their meager belongings in preparation for their move. The routine was always the same. Jadwiga would go to the home in the morning, seek out those chosen for evacuation, and chat amiably as she folded, tucked, wrapped and zipped their belongings into their suitcases. Each packing group took less time as people were traveling with less and less. On one of these packing-up occasions as Jadwiga referred to it, she heard a voice calling out her full name. She was told that a German lieutenant was waiting to speak with her outside. Jadwiga could feel the fear well up inside and was sure that the soldier had come for her husband.

With her heart dropped into her stomach, she went outside to confront the dreaded soldier. For the longest time Jadwiga and the German stared at each other without speaking. After many moments, the German reached into his pocket and Jadwiga realized that the soldier had not come for Isidore, but had come for her. He was reaching for his gun, and Jadwiga knew that he was going to shoot her right there in the street. The soldier paused for a moment, staring at Jadwiga with an odd expression before pulling out a letter. He handed it to Jadwiga and asked her if the handwriting was familiar to her. Jadwiga blinked and swallowed the bile that had risen in her throat. Too stunned to speak, she looked down at the letter and nodded. She recognized the writing of her sister-in-law, Hela, the dentist, and she gestured that she knew the person who had written it. The German then spoke to Jadwiga with pity in his voice and said, "Armeleute." He told Jadwiga that he was trying to help her people and that he felt sorry for what they had to endure. Jadwiga was once again overcome and was verbally unable to respond to the soldier. He saluted her, turned and left. Only then was Jadwiga able to control her fragile emotions enough to open the letter.

Hela had written the letter, and there were some inclusions from Moryce. The couple had been relocated from Kalisz to Sandomierz, and now resettled into a new camp. When they left Jadwiga in Kalisz, they had been stuffed into separate freight trains with at least one-hundred-fifty souls per cart. The stench of all those bodies crowded together was overbearing and there was no ventilation whatsoever. Moryce wrote that many children and the weak and the sick simply choked or froze to death before their very eyes. The winter was particularly brutal, and without heat, the temperature in the cars was below freezing. He wondered how he or anyone survived since the journey had taken several days. He wrote that the German Lieutenant, who would be delivering this letter to Jadwiga had proved himself to be a thoroughly decent human being and could be trusted. He had come along with the transport as a military policeman, but instead of guarding the people, he chose to help them in any way he could. He even shared his food with those who had none, and was always trying to comfort the sick and the helpless as best he could.

When at long last the trains reached Sandomierz, the town was already so overcrowded with relocated persons that the German soldiers had no place to house the newcomers. While a decision was being made about where to house the people, the Germans left the trains standing in the fields with the doors locked. The poor souls inside were without food and heat. The first day, Hela wrote, the people inside the cars were quiet and frightened. During the trip, a method had been devised to place the bodies of the dead so that the living could have additional room. That first day the bodies of the dead were carefully placed, and the sick were tended to in preparation for disembarking. When the temperature dropped and darkness crept through the crevices, the people inside became upset. Arguments started and people started shoving at one another for space. The soldiers had not allowed anyone to leave the cars to stretch their legs or relieve themselves, and the inhabitants began to bang on the doors and walls. The pounding was a rhythmic drum beat that increased in intensity and then gradually died down to silence. A day passed, and some people were no

longer able to hold their bodily functions. The smell of urine was pervasive in the closed quarters and it seemed to cling to the walls where the cold weather had steamed up the warm fluid. Another day passed, and then another. More and more people fell sick, and more people died. After four days, no one moved from their position in the cars, and few people spoke. Finally, on the sixth day, the soldiers unlocked the train doors and allowed the inhabitants to exit. The people who were still alive dragged themselves out to relieve themselves right there in the snow, without any thought of modesty. The people were frantic, and those with the energy lay right down on the ground and scooped handfuls of snow into their parched mouths while the Germans watched with amusement. At the end of her letter, Hela wrote that she still had some medicines left and was able to relieve some of the suffering of the very ill. She wrote that she drew courage and strength from helping others, and begged Jadwiga not to worry about her or Moryce. Jadwiga read the letter through several times, and then resumed her self-imposed responsibility to help more people from the home pack and prepare for their departure from Kalisz.

Kalisz, too, was readying for deportations, and as usual, the order for evacuation came before they were ready. The German policemen arrived and grouped the residents, including the cousins Koninskis, in the street. From there, the guards marched the group in pairs for two miles to the railway station to await boarding. Jadwiga silently watched the proceedings with her father until the last pair disappeared. Jadwiga and Benzion were wracked with sorrow and depression. “And now they are gone,” Benzion said to Jadwiga before returning inside.

Chapter 11

It would be days before Jadwiga could concentrate on anything. She felt helpless and sad and wondered if the Koninskis had suffered the same fate as Hela and Moryce. Then, two weeks following the evacuation, a letter came from the cousins Koninski with the news that they and the old people from the home had been resettled into a camp near Warsaw. Jadwiga knew immediately that her father's plan to go to Warsaw for asylum was impossible. She shared the letter with Benzion, who then asked her to join him at the religions meeting with the Tora and Talmud. Jadwiga agreed and prepared herself for the gathering, meeting with other religious Jews. Benzion was greeted with pleasure and enthusiasm. Jadwiga's father spoke with each and every one of them and as a Cohen, he blessed them all. Although her father took great pleasure in his role as a spiritual guide, the men could see that he was sad and depressed. Everyone there begged Benzion not to feel responsible for the departure of the people from the Home for the Jewish Aged since there was nothing that he could have done. They knew how kind he had always been, and how many people he had helped in the face of adversity. Benzion thanked the men for their kind words and with regret and foreboding, bid them goodbye. Benzion did not think he would ever see his friends again.

The next day, Jadwiga and her father went to visit the sick at the Jewish Hospital, where once again they were greeted warmly by both men and women alike. Benzion knew most of those at the hospital, and he chatted with them gladly, but he was completely spent when they finally arrived home, greatly concerning Jadwiga. To further complicate matters, Jadwiga had asked Dr. Gross-Chinagel, the only remaining doctor at the Jewish Hospital to give her father a complete physical, whereupon she confirmed that Benzion had Angina Pectoris. Dr. Gross-Chinagel told Jadwiga that Benzion's condition had advanced and that he needed immediate bed rest and medicinal injections. After

the diagnosis, Benzion seemed to become even more incapacitated, and no longer wanted to leave their apartment.

The week of Benzion's ominous diagnosis, a knock came to the door one morning while Jadwiga was attending her father. Her heart started to pound and her body broke out with a sheen of cold sweat. Knocks at the door had come to mean beatings with weeks of recovery, and Jadwiga didn't think she would be able to bear another bloody beating. Reluctantly, Jadwiga opened the door and was surprised to see Isidore's father. Jadwiga cried out and embraced her father-in-law, stunned that he was standing before her. Isidore's father explained that they had been evacuated from their home in Stawiszyn and that he had no where to go. Jadwiga immediately invited him to stay in their little apartment.

Mendel Wisniewski was a self-described tough old man who had seen it all and lived to talk about it. His wife, Isidore's mother, had been deceased since before the war. Originally, she had moved with her family to Kalisz following Kazmiesz Wielki's invitation to Germans to move to Poland to conduct commerce many years before. She and Mendel had been peasants but had lived a happy life, and Mendel had relocated to the countryside after her death. Roman had spent many happy times visiting the older man and playing with the dozens of chickens and dogs that inhabited his grandfather's property. Roman particularly loved sleeping in the big piles of hay stacked throughout the farm and the way the noon-day sun made the hay smell so sweet. Jadwiga had chided Roman every time he returned home, saying that he smelled like a livery.

In Mendel's younger years, he had served for the Tsar in the Russian Calvary in the years when Poland was under Russian rule, and he had fought battles deep in the Russian territory. Roman loved to hear him tell tales of that time, and often asked him to repeat stories that had been told so many times, Roman knew them by heart.

Mendel now helped his son-in-law, Daniel Stashwas, run his wholesale grocery business. Sometimes Daniel's business required Mendel to make travelling sales, and on occasion, he brought Roman along. The boy eagerly

joined his grandfather on these trips, as he loved meeting the people and seeing the countryside.

Mendel had been a wonderful and resourceful man, traits that his son, Isidore had inherited. Now, as Jadwiga looked at him entering her apartment, looking for all the world as though he had never been alive at all.

Jadwiga's father and father-in-law were to share a room, but unfortunately, Jadwiga's father-in-law snored so badly that her own seriously ill father was unable to sleep. Jadwiga observed that Benzion's health was rapidly deteriorating, and as she observed this, his complaints, too, became worse. After only a week, Jadwiga was at her wit's end with both men and so devised a way to alleviate the situation. She moved Benzion and Roman to her own room and transferred her father-in-law to the other. Though this arrangement was better for her father's health and well being, it did not bring about an improvement in his health. Jadwiga constantly tried to give him the best of care and as a result her nerves became raw and she began to sleep poorly. She also had to salve arguments between family members. Jadwiga knew it was because everyone was in such close quarters, but she was angry, nonetheless, and wondered how to manage better.

Exhausted, she fell asleep one night and dreamed about her mother. In her dream, her mother seemed alive but was dressed for burial. Jadwiga heard her mother's voice clearly saying, "it shall happen within a week." The dream upset Jadwiga greatly and she cried and screamed in her sleep, waking the entire house. Everyone questioned her, but she wouldn't tell anyone about the contents of her dream. The very next day Jadwiga asked one of the religious and learned men in residence at the Jewish Hospital about the meaning of her dream. The man listened attentively and then explained that the Jewish religion did not attach any meaning to dreams. He advised her to forget about it. Far from feeling reassured, Jadwiga felt that the religious man was upset by her description because he looked grim, and he had also said something she was unable to understand under his breath as she left.

When she got home, she once again found her father in a depressed mood. He wanted to talk to her and he told her that now was the right time, as tomorrow might be too late. Jadwiga tried to dissuade him from talking and getting excited but his determination stopped her protests. He asked Jadwiga to promise him that after he died she would always keep the Sabbath and light the candles, even though he realized that she was not a religious person like himself. Faith in God would always be her greatest comfort, and that her good deeds throughout her entire life, would always find favor in God's eyes. He wanted Jadwiga to live up to his expectations, for his sake if not for her own. Jadwiga didn't want her father to notice how upset she really was and responded that there was no reason for worry as she was sure that his health had improved and would continue to do so. Benzion smiled gently in agreement, and from that moment on, she rarely left his bedside.

Days later a German lieutenant came to the apartment without warning. Jadwiga's father was horrified and certain that they would be forced to leave but the German simply searched the entire apartment and declared it unsuitable and without appropriate facilities. After taking a final look around the apartment, he left without further comment. The incident further weakened Jadwiga's father and she feared he would have an attack. She made the decision to move her father to the hospital where he would receive better care than she could provide in the tiny overcrowded rooms. She was nervous about suggesting the move, but when she finally got the courage to speak to her father, she was stunned that he agreed with her. Dr. Gross-Chinagel advised against moving Benzion to the hospital as the trip, even though short, would be too much for her father to bear. Instead, Dr. Gross-Chinagel arranged for a nurse from the hospital to visit Jadwiga's father at the apartment. There, the nurse could administer injections, and see to Benzion's other needs. Her father became very restless and feverish and often asked for a prayer book. Benzion prayed out loud and then fell into an exhausted sleep. Jadwiga panicked every time he closed his eyes and thought he was going to die at any moment. Night after night she stayed up holding a

constant vigil over him. Her father would waken at intervals and implore Jadwiga not to be upset or worry about him. Then she would check her father's pulse, hoping each time, it would feel stronger. At one point she could not detect any pulse at all and she left the room to dispatch her husband to the hospital and return with the doctor. Her father's end seemed imminent and she became frantic after Isidore left as it took him forever to return.

By eight o'clock the next morning, Jadwiga's father looked very grave. His male nurse gave Benzion his daily injection and Jadwiga and Isidore waited for the outcome. Jadwiga lit a candle at her father's bedside and her father opened his eyes one last time, sighed, and then was gone. Jadwiga deeply mourned the loss of her father, her friend. And although she felt her heart would surely break, she pulled her emotions together and made the arrangements for her father's funeral. This she did alone since her husband and father-in-law were also Cohens in the Jewish religion. This distinction forbade the two men to remain in a house of mourning. Jadwiga requested that the Kachal send people to prepare her father for burial without delay.

The Kachal had known Jadwiga's father very well and were deeply affected by his death. Jadwiga's landlady, Mrs. Rzyzniewska and Jadwiga's housekeeper, Gosposia, were both of the Roman Catholic faith and yet they still shared the grief of Jadwiga's father's death. When the last service for the deceased was over, the body was taken to the hospital morgue where many patients, even those who were so ill they could barely walk, came to pay their last farewells. The visitor's paid their respects to Jadwiga and all said that Benzion was a good friend and generous benefactor.

The ceremonies ended and when all had finally gone, Jadwiga thought back on her life with her father. Benzion had been a loving and understanding man and she would miss him terribly. His death had been so much like her mother's as had been his burial. The Germans had forbidden anyone to use or visit the Jewish Cemetery, so Jadwiga decided to transport the body by carriage in the middle of the night so he could be buried according to the Jewish ritual in a

grave next to her mother. Jadwiga was the only member of her family at this midnight ceremony as all her brothers and sisters-in-law were in unknown places, but she felt that they would have approved of her funeral arrangements. Following the late funeral, the mourners returned to the hospital where they ate a ritualistic breakfast of eggs with ashes, rolls, and herring. Jadwiga herself sat Shiva on a low stool surrounded by patients doing penance for her father. It was late in the afternoon before Jadwiga's husband persuaded her to return home to their children, who were being cared for by Koperska and Mrs. Rzyzniewska, the landlady. Mrs. Rzyzniewska took charge of the Wisniewski family management so that Jadwiga could properly mourn her father.

During the next days of Shiva, messages of condolence came from various places where, somehow, friends had heard of Jadwiga's father's death. Jadwiga was consoled by the arrival of these letters, while at the same time was alarmed. If her fiends and relatives knew that her father had passed on wouldn't the Germans know as well? She worried greatly that the Germans would come asking after the whereabouts of her father's body, but after waiting in fear for days no one came to inquire. Jadwiga was distressed to hear that not long after her father's burial, the Germans started dumping bodies, usually ones that had been shot, into the cemetery regardless of the faith of the deceased. The desecration could not be prevented by the Jews, but Jadwiga took pleasure that unbeknown to the Germans, Jadwiga's father's was the last proper burial that had been performed at that cemetery.

Chapter 12

Life in the ghetto was becoming more complicated. Disturbing information was filtering in about mass murders, deportations to unknown places, and more unspeakable German atrocities. Meanwhile, Isidore's father, Mendel, was so depressed that he tried to take his own life. Mendel strongly suspected what had happened to the rest of his family, and he didn't care to live anymore. He turned on the gas in the house after the verification came that two more of his granddaughters had been taken away, and had not been heard from since. Jadwiga had been out that day and when she came into the home she smelled the gas and rushed to turn it off. She couldn't believe that Mendel would attempt suicide, as it meant certain damnation to a religious Jew. It was a blessing that soon after Mendel's own deportation he was to die quickly from self-induced starvation while living in one of the camps.

The latest German decree to affect all Jews was that they must identify themselves by a white armband embroidered on both sides with a yellow Star of David. Roman thought it was a joke and couldn't understand why everyone was taking it so seriously. He went around telling everyone not to wear them. Jadwiga, meanwhile, set about trying to find material to make the bands. She cut the strips from an old skirt and sewed the star using bits of thread left over from their factory stock. Roman refused to wear the band and no matter what method of persuasion his parents tried, he would have nothing to do with it. Eventually Jadwiga and Isidore left Roman alone, hoping that his Germanic appearance would be enough to protect him from being targeted as a Jew without a band. The rest of the Jewish population, including the Wisniewski family, followed the rule, and wore their bands under penalty of death.

It was 1940, over a year since the outbreak of the war and Isidore had been able to find work in his trade when the Germans decided to reopen and restock the factories and hire workers to make clothes and accessories. Much time passed quickly and Isidore was delighted that even Roman now worked

there, in between going to Christian Sunday School and to the ghetto school to learn German. It was Isidore's hope that once Roman learned the ways of the Christians and the language of the enemy he would be able to safely pass as one of them. He had no such hopes for himself, but tried not to think in such negative terms. Instead he focused on keeping his friends and family working, in what was once his own factory, and out of harm's way because of their manufacturing positions. If Isidore pretended hard enough, he could still feel like a free man running his own business, and that feeling kept him sane.

Meanwhile, the Germans continued to evacuate the Jews in a street-by-street fashion, ultimately preparing the town for annexation to the Reich. The Wisniewski family moved yet again when the Germans designated two stripped-down, but large apartment buildings that faced one another on the edge of town as the Jewish ghetto. These two Chopin Street buildings divided into a residential building and a workshop building. The Jewish hospital was located one block away and the only other Jewish designated building left in the town was the orphanage that was located on the other side of town.

Isidore spent his days dividing his time between overseeing the factory work and making visitations to the hospital where he did his best to aide the needy and ailing. Somehow, although no one ever knew just how he accomplished it, he even managed to persuade the Germans to allot a few houses on Chopin and New Streets to some of the people in the Jewish community. Isidore had a knack for soliciting German cooperation, a trick only he knew how to execute. Miraculously, he was also able to get the few forgotten sick people from the old age home transferred to the hospital.

A certain Mr. A. Wartski had a factory located on New Street, and with his help Isidore was able to establish even more factory workshops in order to give more people something to do. He also talked the Germans into allotting still more rooms to some of the Jewish community in an apartment house across the street from this "new" factory. Jadwiga and Isidore themselves were given two plain rooms and a shared kitchen at this new location. In one room, Jadwiga's

father-in-law and her son Roman slept, and in the other room, Jadwiga, Isidore and their daughter Halinka slept. Their kitchen was shared with the Friedlander family who lived down the corridor, and the Schwarcbart family occupied a small apartment on the ground floor. The arrangement pleased Jadwiga greatly and the families were able to grow vegetables in the large backyard.

Jadwiga had also found strength of character after her father died, and had even become quite active in community affairs. Her council proved helpful in alleviating the tensions and hardships in the day to day existence of this tiny community. Jadwiga was a born negotiator and arbitrator, and was even beginning to feel normal again. But as it so often happened in times of war, that peace was shattered by a single piece of news. The community received word that Mayor Grabowski was determined to rid Kalisz of all the remaining Jews once and for all. Based on what he had heard from some of his German friends, Isidore concluded that the Mayor did not intend to resettle anyone, but rather to reach the solution by working with the Germans to eliminate the Jews. When Jadwiga asked Isidore what this news meant, Isidore explained that the mayor intended to shoot all the Jews dead right there in the streets.

Isidore was asked for advice and guidance from the community since had always been able to communicate well with both the Polish and German authorities. Isidore's German was excellent, and based on his reputation for skilled communication, he was asked to become the leader and spokesperson of the Jewish people. Naturally he accepted the post mostly because he had little choice. Isidore thought at length about the problem facing the Jews, and came to a solution that he believed would protect the community. He decided that the only way to survive Mayor Grabowski's decree was to make the Jews completely indispensable to the Germans through their unpaid hard work at the factories. It had worked a year ago and it would work again. Isidore knew that the Jewish population was being systematically moved out of the city into a monastery and from there, being packed into trains and moved out of Poland. Moryce and Hela had been evacuated, and they knew from Helana's letters that the end for

evacuated Jews was near. In the last few months, Poland had effectively been divided into two halves, the Governorship and the Reich, both of which were controlled by the Germans. Neither division wanted the care of the Jews.

Isidore traveled to the beautiful city of Sandomierz soon after his decision to pitch the community's plan of free labor to the Reich. At the city hall, he proposed the plan whereby machines should be installed in the orphanage so that the people could operate a factory. Isidore persuaded the authorities to back the venture, promising tremendous profits for them. A German sympathizer, Mr. Wojciechowski, was a man who wielded great influence over city matters and Isidore approached the man and proposed that he, Mr. Wojciechowski, should be the production manager of the enterprise and receive a very good salary for his trouble. This suggestion appealed to the greedy official who enthusiastically promised Isidore that he would get consent from the mayor.

Following his meeting with Mr. Wojciechowski, Isidore regrouped with everyone in the Jewish community including the children. To each person Isidore assigned a job to be performed when the plan commenced. To Isidore's delight, there were tailors, dressmakers, furriers, shoemakers, corset and brazier makers, cap makers, millenaries, and watchmakers among the group. Skilled laborers were more valuable than those who were not, and those detail oriented trades would come in handy at the factory.

Once everyone had agreed to their assignment, Isidore once again met with Mr. Wojciechowski. It seemed that the mayor liked the money making plan and would give the work permit with four conditions. One, Isidore would have to be the factory manager, and as factory manager, he would be responsible for everyone and everything that happened in the factory. The penalty for failure of any kind would be death. Two, there would be strict city control over the bookkeeping. Not one penny would escape the scrutiny of the mayor or his appointed officials. Three, no private work of any kind was allowed on the premises. Four, strict city supervision would be enforced over all factory expenditures. A fifth condition was also to be met, which stated that all the

workers were to wear, without exception, the yellow armbands with the Star of David displayed on both the front and back. Isidore agreed to the conditions with a light heart, his excitement tempered only by the death warrant issued for anything that could or would go wrong. Experience in business taught Isidore that although they could control every aspect of a factory and its inner workings, he could not control the people inside of it, and could only pray that everyone would act appropriately. The city would pay for all the itemized raw materials and necessities, and that Isidore, and Isidore alone, would make all the purchases personally.

It was decided that the factory would be divided into different departments that would produce clothes, shoes, and any other necessities that arose. The Jewish community understood that their survival depended on their usefulness, and even the untrained learned quickly to be indispensable. The butcher, for instance, became a shoemaker's apprentice and in a short time had mastered that trade. Many others took his transformation as an inspiration and followed suit.

The community made all kinds of products at their factory, all under the relentless watchful eye of Isidore and the city officials. The workers were reminded to wear the armband at all times. Much to Jadwiga's dismay, Roman still refused to wear the star, and perhaps because of his coloring, no one ever questioned Roman. Isidore was proud that out of the entire Jewish ghetto, his son was the only male brave enough to stand alone.

Jadwiga, however, thought that Roman was stark raving mad to defy the decree so blatantly. Not only was it illegal to be without the band, but it was also illegal to leave the ghetto, and Roman did both. He had friends in towns all over the countryside and refused to stop visiting them. Isidore knew that it was that kind of courage that would allow Roman to survive the difficulty of the war, and Isidore made sure that Roman knew how proud he was of his bravery. Isidore was confident that should anything ever happen to him, Roman would assume

the care of the family. Isidore made sure that Roman knew the many sources to go to for help should the need arise.

For now, however, business was working out quite well at the factory, and Isidore even managed to convince his workers to work on Saturdays. All religious Jews put aside their beliefs of working on the Sabbath since they knew that their very lives depended on this sacrifice and this extra work day increased the product output and proved to the mayor that the Jewish community in Kalisz was indispensable. Roman, when he was not off in the countryside visiting friends and generally rebelling, performed odd jobs at the factory. He often worked with a master tailor who taught him to make buttonholes by hand and sew the heavy material between the coat and lining fabrics to make them stiff. Their factory made uniforms as one of their main products in addition to fur coats and other articles of fine clothing. Roman made a game of the work, and organized the other children into small pretend armies. He would then borrow shiny buttons and give them out to the children as though presenting medals to his soldiers. Although Isidore was amused by Roman's game, he was always worried that a button would be misplaced and that the loss would cost him his own life.

Halinka, and sometimes Roman, worked inside the coat factory making dresses for the doll factory. The doll factory was located outside of the ghetto on Babina and Nadwodna Street and had once been owned by a Mr. Schreier although, like everything else, was now owned by the Germans. In order to work in the doll factory, the employees needed to obtain a special travel pass that allowed them to leave the ghetto. As Jadwiga was the overseer of the doll factory, she too was allowed to walk from the ghetto to the factory and back the same way. As one of the few Jews permitted to do this, Jadwiga had to bring the finished clothes to the factory and return with material scraps and patterns to make new ones. The only other Jews allowed this travel pass were Isidore and Mr. Hahn, who purchased the food supplies for the ghetto inmates. The city purchased all the materials for the factories as well as the clothing for the ghetto inmates. In return, the ghetto inhabitants worked.

Isidore was very optimistic about the community's responsibility in their own survival, and he was always telling the people that they were completely safe. Roman thought that no one actually believed him, but they respected Isidore so much that no one had the heart to argue. Isidore would always say to the people, "were going to build it, were going to make it." Roman would sometimes look at his father and say in an amateurish fashion, "Daddy, were going to build it, were going to make it, were going to fold it up and run away," and then Isidore would chase Roman around the factory to the amusement of the other workers.

The Germans seemed very pleased with this factory arrangement and in return would bring the workers extra food so that they would make more beautiful uniforms. In the middle of all the working and survival, Isidore made sure that Roman was sent to a Heder, a religious school, where they taught the Torah and religious history. Isidore was concerned that Roman would lose touch with the Jewish religion and as all Isidore's hopes were pinned on Roman being a survivor, he wanted to assure that the ways of his birth were passed on and lived on. At the Jewish school, Roman learned the scriptures, Hebrew and prayers, and the boy soon became very religious. It comforted Roman to believe that there was a God and that there was good in the world. On the other hand, Isidore also wanted his son to take full advantage of his Aryan appearance and so, Roman attended a Sunday Christian school as well. Roman understood that he was fortunate in that he had blond hair and blue eyes and that his looks could save him from harm. Other members of the community did not look like Roman and though he was young, he understood that they would probably suffer for it.

This was never more clearly illustrated than the day he was walking on the street with his friend Landau, a red-haired Polish Jew and they were stopped by a German Gendarme because Landau was wearing the Star of David and Roman was not. The German asked for names and Landau told the German that Roman was the son of Wisniewski. Landau and Roman were then taken to the Konemdatura to answer questions. On the way to the station poor Landau was

shaking with fright and a volksdeutsch, a half-Pole, half-German man, told them that even Churchill himself couldn't save them. Roman didn't know who Churchill was, but he realized that he was brave and certainly not afraid of these people, or even afraid of death. Once at the station, Roman gave his name and said, "I am Polish in my blood and bones." The officer answered, "Do you know I could kill you right now?" Roman responded, "You must kill my father then, too." The official told the young men to get out.

Chapter 13

The Germans continued to be pleased with the work being accomplished at the factory. They opened cooperatives where the Jewish workers were allotted small shares of daily necessities like horse meat, margarine, marmalade, black bread, potatoes, some soap and a bit of coal. The mayor made it clear that these small measures were only to keep the Jewish population healthy so that he could grow his wealth and power and assure himself a comfortable position in the Reich. Isidore did not allow himself to ponder the truth, he only cared about the survival of his people. He knew that the longer they were allowed to occupy the town, the better their chances of survival, and if they could enjoy better food while they survived, the more the better. The profits from the factory were high, as the unpaid-workmanship was excellent. Goods were sold to the Germans, their wives, and high Polish officials. Sales at the factory skyrocketed and the workers developed a sense of security since they felt assured of steady employment. Isidore was indeed excited, however, he lived in a constant dichotomy of turmoil as he was held responsible for real or imaginary omissions. He dreaded the regular inspection of the factory books since the city hall people constantly accused him of conducting poor workmanship and always found various other transgressions committed by the workers. The officials abused Isidore daily and threatened him with a violent death on a constant basis.

Jadwiga worked closely with her husband in the factory and gave out materials and designs, assigned work, examined finished products, assisted the machine operators, and performed other administrative duties. Under her watchful eye, each swatch of material given to the factory by a customer would be pasted into a special sample book that was kept in the office. Then Jadwiga would be responsible for any mistake or omission dealing with a particular pattern. Often the Gestapo would drop in for an unexpected inspection of the factory and Jadwiga would be asked to produce the sample book. The Gestapo would then match the swatches with the clothes that were being produced at that

moment. One day, during one of these inspections, a Gestapo inspector claimed that a swatch for an unfinished green dress was not in the sample book. They accused Jadwiga of deceit and of violating a factory rule. Jadwiga opened the sample book and with a calm belied only by the tremor in her hands as she turned the pages, found the green swatch that matched the dress. The Gestapo agent was angry and flung the book down. He screamed at Jadwiga that she was lucky the sample was accounted for otherwise her body would be hanging from the ceiling for all to observe. The Gestapo representatives finished their spot checks and left the factory the way they had entered, scowling. The work continued and no one spoke of this, the latest in a long line of Gestapo incidents.

As well as working at the factory, Roman spent a lot of time having lessons. However, although the factory work was keeping the community occupied, no amount of daily occupation or pretending could overshadow the harsh reality of their living situation. Roman recognized the symptoms of denial in his mother. Jadwiga was constantly re-arranging their home, caring for the family, running around the factories, all with a chipper exterior, when Roman knew that inside she was a zombie. Conversation with Jadwiga was impossible. She answered a simple yes or no to simple questions, met questions about their future with silence, and in fact, the only time Jadwiga offered discussion was to beg Roman to wear his armband.

Through all this, what Roman feared the most was becoming ill and having to enter the Jewish hospital. He had heard of several natural deaths of people who had entered with minor illnesses or wounds, and died of serious infections. There were painfully few medicines available at the hospital, the food was inadequate, soap was scarce, and there was a shortage of disinfectants and clean linens. The young and the old were suffering from neglect and malnutrition, and when the German doctors came to the hospital for an inspection tour, they insisted that the weaker and older patients be made ready for transfer to special convalescent homes.

Jadwiga worked side by side with Doctor Gross-Chinagel in her free moments preparing the patients for whatever journey lay ahead. Dr. Gross-Chinagel was the soul of the hospital and the sole reason the hospital was still in existence. Dr. Gross-Chinagel had been a well-respected and excellent doctor before the war and even now the young doctor seemed to be able to work miracles with her limited resources. One of these miracle cases was the recovery of a beautiful girl, who upon witnessing a terrible atrocity went into shock followed by a complete paralysis. Dr. Gross-Chinagel spent much of her free time softly coaxing the young patient to speak about happier times until it seemed that the patient had come to terms with her experience. Soon thereafter, the girl had a complete recovery. The poor doctor worked long hard hours and lived in constant terror that the German's would find out her carefully kept secret. Dr. Gross-Chinagel was pregnant and pregnancy among the Jews was forbidden. Dr. Gross-Chinagel had treated many of the mothers victimized by the Germans for their obvious bellies, and she knew that if anyone observed her increasing size, she too would be tortured and possibly shot on the spot.

At first, Dr. Gross-Chinagel was alarmed at the constant removal of her patients, but told Jadwiga that she believed the Germans would be providing her patients with better care elsewhere as she had such limited resources. Jadwiga did not believe that the patients would be moved to better quarters when healthy people such as herself were made to live as they were. She was also not convinced that Dr. Gross-Chinagel believed the German story either, but both women pretended that the move was a positive one. So, Jadwiga and Dr. Gross-Chinagel cheerfully worked side by side in preparing the patients for their departure. They made sure that the patients were clean and presentable, including a Mrs. Rosenblat, who was Jadwiga's brother Aaron's mother-in-law.

When Jadwiga discovered that Isidore was highly suspicious of these relocations and was going to inquire at the city hall as to the destination for these people, she quietly asked him not to reveal the answer to her. Isidore looked at Jadwiga as though she was a crazy woman, not understanding her need to

believe these poor souls were going to a better place. Isidore said that she was far too bright to fool herself about the reality of the war, and that he was leaving for the city hall without haste. When he arrived, his query was answered with the name of a location that he did not recognize, and the statement that although relatives were permitted to write them, no one would be allowed to visit the old people. The city hall official knew Isidore's position in the ghetto, and that Isidore had tremendous influence over the inhabitants which was why he had agreed to see him in the first place. The official sensed Isidore's unrest about the whole situation, and so placed a call to Lodz requesting that there be warm railroad cars or buses and hot meals available for the old people upon their arrival at the station. Somewhat reassured by the official's matter of fact tone, Isidore returned to the factory and lost himself in hard work. In spite of her protests, Isidore told Jadwiga of the incident, hoping that it would give her some relief.

The day of departure for the newest group to be taken away arrived, and to everyone's surprise, what arrived to transport the hospital inhabitants was not a comfortable bus or railroad car, but rather a black truck with tiny windows, more appropriate for the transport of animals rather than humans. In less than a moment, the street was completely surrounded by German military police so that no one could enter or leave the area. A taxi full of drunken SS officers arrived on the guarded scene, and the young officers proceeded to smack and beat anyone they came into contact with. The old people were roused out of their beds in the hospital and rushed outside to be piled into the truck with the Germans urging them to hurry all the while. Jadwiga herself was caught in a squeeze while helping Mrs. Rosenblat, who suffered from a broken leg, get into the truck. The old lady thanked Jadwiga for her help then whispered to her that the situation seemed very suspicious. Jadwiga had the same feeling. Other trucks arrived to accommodate the large group, and as each truck was filled with the old people, their possessions were ripped from their hands and haphazardly thrown into other trucks. There was no thought for the safety or comfort of the people.

When the trucks were packed to overflowing capacity, the door of each truck was closed and sealed shut. In a matter of minutes, drivers had the trucks lined up and ready to depart the ghetto. Jadwiga turned away from the overwhelming scene and attempted to reenter the hospital. As she did so, she stumbled against the prone figure of a Mrs. Lipscszye, who was lying right near the entrance. Mrs. Lipscszye's father had been one of the departing patients and the sorrow of seeing him off caused her to faint. Just as Jadwiga bent to drag Mrs. Lipscszye inside, she felt a blow on her back and heard in German, "Leave her alone you damn Jew and let her die." Jadwiga straightened up and turned to find herself looking into the eyes of an SS officer with his stick raised to her. He struck her again and again with the stick, beating her unmercifully. The blows to her legs were so terrible that blood spurted out of her skin and splattered onto the steps of the hospital. The officer kept it up until he was out of breath. With one final blow to her ankle, he wiped his stick on her back and walked away.

Jadwiga lay on the ground for quite some time after his departure. She was bleeding and in great pain, but after a time managed to drag herself and Mrs. Lipscszye back into the safety of the hospital. Dr. Gross-Chinagel and another patient rushed to give help to the two women. Dr. Gross-Chinagel cleaned Jadwiga's wounds and checked her for broken bones. While the injuries looked bad and felt even worse, no bones had been broken. Dr. Gross-Chinagel begged Jadwiga to stay the night at the hospital, but Jadwiga was afraid that she would be mistaken for a patient and taken away. She thanked Dr. Gross-Chinagel for her help and returned to her apartment.

Once home, Jadwiga found a postcard waiting from an acquaintance in Zaguruw. The acquaintance informed Jadwiga that more and more members of the Jewish community in that town were being evacuated each week. Her friend feared that she too would soon be evacuated and requested that Jadwiga send someone immediately to retrieve the two daughters of Jadwiga's late sister. Jadwiga sat on her bed and let the postcard drop from her fingers and fall onto the floor. She could think of no reason to go on. She hurt physically and

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

emotionally. She dropped her head onto her pillow and slept for many hours. When she awoke, her thoughts were again on those people that had been evacuated from the hospital. She prayed for them and their families and then, putting aside her concerns about the recently departed old souls, she picked up the postcard and focused on how best to help these two young girls, whom she knew so well. Upon Jadwiga's sister's death, members of Jadwiga's family cared for both girls. Jadwiga could not let the care and nurturing her family had bestowed on the girls go to waste and so decided to risk her own life by leaving the ghetto in order to seek the council of Gosposia, who was living in a nearby town. Gosposia knew that shortly before the German invasion of Poland, the two girls had left Kalisz for Kletshew to have a vacation with their father, but she had lost track of them soon after. Although the prospect was risky, Gosperska promised Jadwiga that she would do everything in her power to get the girls back to Kalisz, now that they had an idea of the girls' whereabouts. Jadwiga thanked her, provided her with the money she would need for her trouble, and returned unnoticed to the ghetto.

Gosposia took charge of returning the girls to Jadwiga. As a Christian, she could move about more freely than Jadwiga, though the mission was risky and could earn a penalty of death. She approached a *volksdeutsch* with a request to go to Zagorow, which was the last known address of the girls. Gosposia told the *volksdeutsch* that the girls had been sent with their father from Kleczew to the ghetto in Zagarow. Gosposia then asked that the man bring the two young girls back to Kalisz. He was told that he would be well compensated for his trouble, and after Gosposia paid him up-front for his services the man left for Zagaraw. For the next few days, Jadwiga lived in fear and prayed constantly for the safety of her nieces. The man finally returned, but he was alone. He told Jadwiga that he had arrived in Zagarow too late. Only a single day before his arrival the Zagorow ghetto had been liquidated of its four-thousand Jewish inhabitants, among them Jadwiga's nieces and a Mrs. Ettinger, born Olga Raich, who was the author of the postcard regarding Jadwiga's nieces. He told Jadwiga

[illegible]

[illegible]

that no one knew where they had been sent, but some days later they had the news that the German's had killed them all in the nearby woods.

Chapter 14

One day, a customer, a Polish man, came to the factory to have a talk with Isidore. He needed to tell Isidore a secret, but before he told the secret, he made Isidore promise not to repeat what he was about to learn. It seemed that many people, including this man, were witnesses to the mass burial of the old and sick patients who were taken from the hospital. It was a huge common grave that they were dumped into in the forest on the outskirts of town. The Polish man told Isidore that the people were all dead when they were taken out of the trucks and by their coloring, the man thought they may have been poisoned. He told Isidore that after the dead bodies were unloaded from the trucks, they were thrown like animals into the previously dug common grave. Their belongings were also unloaded from the trucks, tossed, although more carefully than their owners had been, into wagons that were hurriedly driven away in all directions. The Polish man explained that he was telling all of this to Isidore because he wanted to enlighten the Jews as to the true nature of the Nazis. He then asked Isidore if the Jewish community had really believed that the Germans were sending all those old and sick people to a convalescent home.

Isidore broke his promise of silence to some key members of the community. They, in turn, told others and the shattering news spread like a disease and threw the ghetto inmates into a complete panic. That first day of true knowledge brought about a sort of war inside the ghetto. Fights broke out, possessions were broken and people ran wildly about in the streets, in some cases, tearing at their hair. Many packed their few belongings ready to make a run for it but, when the time came to make their escape, they were confused as to which way to go. In a matter of hours the ghetto was completely disorganized

and discipline degenerated. It was almost impossible to get any kind of order out of the chaos.

After that day there was little control over the level of anxiety that the ghetto inmates felt on a daily basis. The community had become suspicious of everyone including one another, and each day more news of increasingly violent German atrocities terrified the people of the ghetto even more. People in other ghettos were disappearing or being openly shot in their rooms or on the street. Even their ghetto did not escape the violence. The father of one well know Jewish family was dragged out of his bed one night and taken downstairs to be shot in the back of the head right in front of his family. He was to be made an example of, the Germans said, although no one knew exactly what example they were trying to set. Roman had talked to the daughter soon after the event, but she was in a sort of catatonic daze and wasn't even crying. The Jews in the ghetto did not know if each day would be their last, and most had stopped caring.

One morning, an order came that all people were to convene in orderly rows in the backyard of the apartment house to await the arrival of a German inspection commission. Fear raced through the ghetto, but the inmates lined up quietly, nonetheless. Isidore, however, pulled a kitchen knife out of a drawer and shouted, "Let's fight," and then he proceeded to give this advice to all who sought his council. Jadwiga was so frightened that she locked Isidore in the bedroom and only let him out a long time later when he promised her that he would not do anything. Isidore then told his father to stay in the apartment while Isidore went down to talk with the Germans. The Germans questioned him about his duties in the ghetto and then inquired about the status of his family. Jadwiga, Roman and Halinka came forward and along with Isidore answered the Germans' questions and then Jadwiga and the children returned to the apartment. When Isidore looked over the list of names that the Germans were working from and saw that it contained his fathers name, Isidore boldly crossed the name off the list. When the Germans asked Isidore if he had any other relatives, Isidore lied and said no, knowing that if they found out, they would kill him for crossing his father off the

list. Each answer was hand entered into a document book. This process was repeated over and over again as each inmate was interrogated. After an endless period of time, the members of the commission talked amongst themselves, reviewing the answers in the book and periodically looking up at the lines of people. When their consultation was finally at an end, they singled out a number of inmates and ordered them to enter a room on the ground floor of the apartment building. They were told that the room was filled with German doctors who were supposedly going to give these selected inmates special examinations. Those who were singled out became ill with fear. Mrs. Lewicka, a young widow with a little three-year-old son, was one of those singled out. She would be the first to go for the examination, so all the others surrounded her and told her that when she came out of the examination she must be ready and willing to answer everyone's questions. Mrs. Lewicka seemed very calm and told the people not to worry, she knew many of the selected were very healthy and would therefore pass the exam with flying colors. She assured everyone that they would all be back out to join the rest of the inmates soon.

Unfortunately, that was not to be the fate of these special people. Once the exams were over the examined people were told to pack their belongings immediately as they were going to be relocated to other ghettos. These people were then lined up outside the ghetto boundaries where they would await transportation. The group included two sisters and a brother by the name of Klotz, who had owned a house on Babina Street, Mr. Gross, the tailor, who was the father of Dr. Gross-Chinagel, Mrs. Gross, his wife, Mr. Semiatyski, the manager of Talmutora, a school for the study of the Jewish religion, and his wife, who was wearing a fur coat and all her jewelry. Both Mr. and Mrs. Semiatyski had tried to hide in the apartment basement to avoid the relocation, but a persistent search by the Germans found them, and they were dragged into the trucks. Another couple, Mr. and Mrs. Meyman, escaped and hid, but left their four young children behind. Unfortunately, the four children were taken. The 'shouched', poultry butcher, was also part of this group and had dressed himself

in a white cotton gown called a kitel, used for burials by the religious Jews. As the butcher entered the truck, he said a prayer for the dying. As the people entered the trucks, the Germans demanded that each person lay their individual bundles off to one side where they would be picked up and transported to them via special trucks. The people in the selected group looked at one another with calm but frightened expressions. They had always been allowed to travel with their belongings during the frequent relocation trips.

Mr. and Mrs. Gross who were entering the bus called out to Isidore, who was helping people to clamor aboard and wished him a farewell. They all embraced with tears in their eyes. Mr. Gross told Isidore that he appreciated all of his efforts to save everyone and that Isidore should never feel guilty in any way. Suddenly several German guards rushed towards the roof of the building where a Mrs. Storh and several others had run to in the hope of avoiding capture. The Germans dragged them back to the trucks and brutally pushed and shoved them inside. Meanwhile, the mayor stood across the street with a camera and took pictures of the people being loaded into the transports. He was also taking pictures of the other Ghetto inmates who were just quietly watching their friends and relatives being ripped out of their lives, all without apparent reason. The mayor was smiling as he took his pictures and it made Jadwiga sick. Roman stood in the window and watched the people being loaded into the trucks. He became angry that some of them dressed in their white robes as if they knew they were going to die and just accepted it without putting up any kind of fight. When the loading had been completed the trucks and buses left. A dreadful silence settled on the ghetto. Isidore went into a kind of shock and talked about the futility of continuing to work at the factory. The ghetto inmates disagreed with Isidore and felt that they must continue to work hard to please the Germans. After all, their hard work had spared them from relocation. It was concluded that they would continue to work.

Isidore, however, did not want to work anymore. He wanted to escape. He had made many Aryan friends throughout his lifetime and he had faith that if

he chose the route, any number of them would be willing to hide him and his family. Isidore's former machine operator, Mr. Sypniewski, proposed a plan to hide the Wisniewski family in his own home. All he asked was that Isidore allow him to manage a secret embroidery factory on his street of New Park, as he owned two hand machines that produced scouting insignias. Isidore considered the offer and then thanked the man for his generosity, but ultimately rejected the idea of going into hiding for fear of what would happen to the community in his absence.

Chapter 15

Once Isidore had made the decision to stay in the ghetto for the sake of his community, he felt overwhelmed with his responsibilities. He was so stressed that he began having fainting spells. The strain of all the events weakened him so much that he temporarily became incapable of making any decisions. Jadwiga did the best she could to cover up his breakdown, and tried to help Isidore through his deep depression as much as possible, but she too was like a zombie. The people left in the ghetto had, like Isidore and Jadwiga, reached their breaking point. No one had patience or common sense, and tempers flared constantly over nothing. The people of the ghetto never let themselves relax and most of the inmates had taken to sleeping fully dressed with all their possessions packed and ready right next to them. When their existence had reached that unbearable state, the people were no longer able to work efficiently and that attracted the attention of several German officials. The Germans sent word that all families with children under 14 years of age were being evacuated the day after the decree. Jadwiga and Isidore decided that their children would not be among those that were taken. That very night, Jadwiga and the children secretly left the ghetto and hurried to the home of Mrs. Rutkowska, who was an Aryan acquaintance. Jadwiga pleaded with Mrs. Rutkowska to hide her children, promising her that she would compensate her generously. Mrs. Rutkowska was reluctant to help, but eventually decided that she would hide the children until the following evening. She felt that no one noticed Jadwiga's daring escape out of the ghetto and, therefore, risk was minimal. Mrs. Rutkowska led the children to a small alcove in the house, settled them into the space, closed the door and then she and Jadwiga moved a heavy wardrobe in front of the opening so that it would be completely obliterated. Jadwiga then returned to the ghetto as quietly as she had left it.

When the Germans arrived the following day, they brought with them large passenger buses instead of the usual black trucks. The Germans had

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

learned that the ghetto Jews feared the black trucks, and made uncomfortable scenes when that type of transportation arrived on the scene. The Nazi commander called through the ghetto for Isidore Wisniewski, the ghetto leader. When Isidore identified himself, the German commander told him that all of the children in the orphanage would also be evacuated in addition to the families. Isidore was stunned to hear this news, as the orphanage food was supplied by the ghetto workers and had no effect on the Nazis whatsoever. Isidore knew he must take action and rushed to the orphanage shouting for all the children to run quickly in all directions. He told them that the buses were on their way and that if they didn't leave they would be taken to unknown destinations. Some of the older children jumped out of windows and ran, but those who were not able to react were rounded up by the Germans and forcefully escorted to the waiting buses. Isidore was roughly handled and interrogated about his presence at the orphanage. He used the excuse that he had brought food to the orphans and that they needed someone to assist them to prepare them for their departure. The answer satisfied the Nazi command who were now occupied in trying to round up the children, and Isidore was ordered to return immediately to the ghetto. Isidore's victory in saving at least fifty young lives that day gave him delight that he hadn't felt for a long time, but it was short lived. As soon as he entered the ghetto once again, he was informed that his sister, her husband, their two children, and his brother-in-law's parents had been rounded up for transfer. They were supposedly being taken to the ghetto at Borenhagen formally known as Kozminek. Also in this group was the pregnant Dr. Gross-Chinagel, her husband, who was a pharmacist. Isidore frantically tried to figure out some way to save these dear people, but he was too late. They too boarded the buses and were soon gone.

Following the evacuation, only four-hundred Jews remained in the Kalisz ghetto. The young people who were left performed extremely hard labor. The ghettos of neighboring towns like Stawiszyn, Blaszki and Opatowek, were also dissolved and the inhabitants were temporarily taken to Kozminek to be settled

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

around in various vacant halls. Soon, they too were transferred to various other places, far away from their friends and loved ones. In that year of 1941, a Gestapo inspector named Ferdinand Geler was sent from Berlin with a plan to rid Kalisz and Borenhagen of all the Jews still remaining. In the Kalisz ghetto, which had now been officially annexed to the third Reich of Germany, there occurred the first mass extermination that was coined as "the final solution."

When Dr. Gross-Chinagel, her husband, and new-born child, named Kubus, were miraculously returned to the Kalisz ghetto soon after leaving, Dr Gross-Chinagel told Isidore what their journey had been like. The doctor told him of the cruelty of the Germans, most of whom were drunk, and how they beat the Jews unmercifully. She also told Isidore that the Nazi named Geler was not only sadistic with his own beatings, but that he encouraged his men to continue the beatings when he was too tired to do them himself. All throughout the journey the Germans talked about what they were going to do about the "Jewish problem" and how long it would take to find a "solution." Dr. Gross-Chinagel told Isidore that as soon as they had arrived in Borenhagen (Kozminek), the Jews were ordered to find their own shelter and most of the Jews sought shelter in an old destroyed synagogue. The synagogue had been stripped of every vestige of worship, and the walls were bare but for the anti-Semitic statements scratched and painted on the walls. Dr. Gross-Chinagel said that all the Jews were stripped of most of their clothes, and that there they huddled in sheds, stables, and garrets, freezing in the dead of winter with almost no food.

Isidore was frightened. The rumors were now confirmed facts, and all news pointed only to the inevitable demise of his people. He told Dr. Gross-Chinagel his thoughts and she shared yet another alarming piece of news with him. After several days of freezing and starvation, the three thousand Jews had been rounded up into a group to await the arrival of trucks. They were told that the trucks would take them to other destinations but she, Dr. Gross-Chinagel and her husband did not believe that they would be relocated. So, they were forced to devise a plan to get the family away from the trucks and back to Kalisz.

The doctor and her husband were in possession of a letter from a German soldier thanking her for saving his life at the Kalisz Hospital. The letter expressed his undying thanks for her help, and his appreciation for her skill. It also praised her for helping a poor German soldier in his greatest time of need. Gathering her courage she approached a Gestapo soldier and showed him the letter. The man looked at the letter, then at Dr. Gross-Chinagel. He consulted with one of the other Gestapo members, who also looked Dr. Gross-Chinagel up and down. She swallowed convulsively, but stood her ground with a confidence that belied her fear. After much communication it was agreed they would do no harm and allowed Dr. Gross-Chinagel and her family to return to Kalisz. She told Isidore that being allowed to return to the ghetto by the Germans was like, “how a sinking man holds on to a straw.” She told him how that feeling of elation died when she heard the Germans laughing about the fact that returning her and her family to the ghetto was of no consequence, as they would all be gone soon.

Isidore was desperate to confront the Gestapo in Kalisz with all the stories he had been made aware of, to confront them with their lies and promises of ‘going to a more comfortable place,’ but Jadwiga convinced him to remain neutral in the presence of the Germans. She felt that by seeking the truth of their fate he might hasten the demise of the Jews in Kalisz by angering the Germans. Isidore agreed with Jadwiga and instead of attacking the Gestapo as he had been so inclined to do, he simply became a listless shell.

Dr. Gross-Chinagel gasped when she finally saw Jadwiga. The stress had brought upon a severe case of eczema on Jadwiga’s face. Jadwiga told the doctor that the condition had become so severe that at one point, Jadwiga’s eyes were barely discernable under all the swelling. As there were no doctors left for the Jews in the ghetto, and Jadwiga was not allowed on her own to visit a doctor outside of the ghetto, a kind German policeman took pity on her discomfort and escorted her himself to the skin doctor outside of the ghetto. The skin doctor examined her and applied a cream that almost instantly reduced the swelling. The doctor examined Jadwiga’s face and pronounced it to be on the mend.

Returning to her old quarters, Dr. Gross-Chinagel found that it had been occupied in her absence. Always helpful, Jadwiga took Dr. Gross-Chinagel' family into her own home, assisting them in cleaning them up and relaxing after their ordeal. Meanwhile, the tales finding their way back to Kalisz from the Borenhagen ghetto were more terrifying by the day. It was said that the Jews were being subjected to unmentionable torture at the hand of Geler and his men, and that afterwards they were forced into the black trucks never to be heard from again. The tales were particularly terrifying regarding babies and small children who were often taken away from the parents and abused, in some cases to death, right in front of the parents and the rest of the ghetto inhabitants.

And then, the news from Borenhagen stopped. Soon after Borenhagen fell silent, Isidore was the recipient of an order to create a list that named all the Jewish girls in the Kalisz ghetto that were capable of performing hard labor. With a heavy heart, Isidore read his orders, acknowledging that the girls named on the list were to be evacuated that night. Isidore couldn't bring himself to complete his task, even though he knew that defying the orders could mean his death. He rounded up all the girls and told them to work in the factory so they would reach the status of being "indispensable." Most of the girls understood the urgency of their situation and heeded his advice, but there were some that were reluctant to work at the factory, preferring instead to stay at home. Two of these girls were the daughters of a woman, a widow, with a son who was employed by the Germans. She forbid the girls from going to the factory, as she was confident that the connections her son had made would save the lives of her girls. Isidore had no choice but to mark these girls down on the list. Without jobs necessary to support the Reich, he had no excuses to protect the girls. Unfortunately, after the final announcement for the collection of the girls was completed, a mad rush for factory jobs was made but little could be done for these girls at such a late date. Isidore was only able to save a handful of the girls, among them only one of the widow's daughters. Isidore was broken down with grief at not being able to do more for the girls. Jadwiga sensed another more sever breakdown and

[illegible]

encouraged Isidore to resign as factory manager. She was certain that resignation was a move that would save his sanity, as sure as it would threaten their lives.

Her pleas fell on deaf ears, however, as Isidore forced himself to rally claiming that he would never abandon his people. As worried as she was about her husband's mental health, she nevertheless sensed a return of his strength. She suspected that his resolve to continue working for his people had allowed him to regain his strength, and she also knew that his strength was how he would survive this ordeal.

And then the orders came again, and this time that the mayor was insisting on the evacuation of all the remaining Jews in the ghetto. He was calling for their relocation to Lodz, commencing immediately with the transfer of the factory. Realizing the gravity and the uncertainty of their situation, Jadwiga and Isidore came to the conclusion that the children would have to be sent away from Kalisz ahead of time in order to save their lives. The decision would not only protect the children, but would also lessen the shock of the preparation for their departure. Jadwiga hurriedly packed all the children's clothes and planned a route with Isidore for how they could get the children to safety. Isidore told her not to worry, that there were many that would lay down their lives for him, as he had done so many times for others. They decided to send the children to Czestochowa. Isidore's factory contained mostly machines that came from Switzerland. When the machines broke down, it would take a long time to get them repaired. Isidore had a friend, Mr. Kietubasa, who was a tool-maker and who would do the repairs for Isidore's machinery by actually making the parts himself. It was to Mr. Kietubasa that Isidore went for help in falsifying the papers that the children would need to get them to Czestochowa. Isidore was able to get blank paper from a woman friend who worked in the city hall and was a Nazi hater and then Mr. Kietubasa was able to do the necessary forgery. This wonderful man took no compensation for this work.

Chapter 16

They discovered that a *volksdeutsch*, a Pole with German parents, who because of this enjoyed German status, was departing for Klobuck station near Czestochowa. Isidore and Jadwiga knew him well and begged him to take the children with him, offering a generous compensation for his efforts. He agreed and promised to take care of the children and deliver them safely to Klobuck. Isidore felt that Klobuck would be safe, as it was a small town lying before the boundary between the Reich and the Protectorate and of little military value. Managing to contact relatives who lived in a nearby village in hut like structures, Isidore received confirmation that the relatives would meet Roman and Halinka on their journey and smuggle them to their final destination of Czestochowa.

An enormous cathedral and the display of the black Madonna statue encrusted with precious stones characterized the little town. The story of the black Madonna states that when the Swedes invaded Poland they went to Czestochowa to steal the Madonna, and while no less than ten men were carrying the statue away, it became unbearably heavy. One of the Swedish soldiers became angry and instructed the men to drop the statue. Out of frustration the man cut and scarred the face of the Madonna with his saber. Yet another tale told of how the Swedish army tried to fight the monks in the town, and how the bombs they threw at them were all thrown back with the monks remaining unharmed. Roman enjoyed hearing the stories about the black Madonna, and was in some small way looking forward to seeing it. He told Jadwiga that he was certain that its power would protect Halinka and himself.

As they were getting ready to leave, dressing themselves in the clothes of the Hitlerjugen, so that they would not be conspicuous on their journey, Gosposia came to talk about her view of the deteriorating situation in the ghetto. Besides the outfits, Roman also wore a stanik, a bodice-like article of clothing that attached to his socks to carry papers and money in. As she said goodbye to the children, she cried right alongside Jadwiga and Isidore as though they were her

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

own family, and in every way but blood they were. With the plan now set in motion, Isidore had the children casually walk down one side of the street toward the railroad station, while he casually followed along the other side. Roman knew that his father carried a gun and that if anything went wrong, he knew that his father would shoot to kill anyone who would try to harm his children. At the station, the children were to meet the *volksdeutsch* who would take them the rest of the way. It was a tense moment as they all had to be on their guard without actually looking like they were. Roman squeezed Halinka's hand to help her get through the agony as much as it helped him. Once or twice, Isidore felt they were being followed, but no one actually spoke out to him or the children, and they continued on their way. Once Isidore had seen the children safely to the station, he didn't linger to watch them, but rather he returned home. It took all of Roman and Halinka's effort not to turn and say goodbye to their father, but they simply looked forward and got onto the train with the *volksdeutsch*.

The children were afraid of the *volksdeutsch*, and they had overheard stories of children being beaten and robbed when their parents were not around to protect them. Roman continuously tried to reason with himself that they had nothing worth stealing, but he did fear being beaten, as no one needed a particular reason to attack. The *volksdeutsch*, too, was frightened. He was afraid that the little blond boy was really an Aryan after all, sent to trap him in his smuggling operation. They would all be happy to part their separate ways when they arrived at the train station. It was dark and cold at their destination, since it was now December. The *volksdeutsch* had been paid to take Roman and Halinka to a little village where they were to stay with some relatives but almost as soon as they got off the train, wild shooting started. Roman could actually see the bullets flying past their heads, and so could the *volksdeutsch*. He ran off leaving Roman and Halinka alone in the middle of a field lying on the ground so as to avoid being hit. The shooting had obviously achieved its purpose as it was not long in duration. As soon as it stopped, Roman told Halinka not to worry and that they would lie in the field until they were sure it was over. They finally got up

from their prone positions in the field, walked along holding hands until Roman, a mere 12 years old, knocked on a nearby door, where the people were able to direct them to the house of their relatives.

Roman and Halinka located the house and were shocked at the condition of their relative's home. They lived like the very lowest of peasants. The floor was of dirt, and although there was no ghetto and the people were walking around freely, they were still wearing the armbands. There was snow on the ground, and many children were sledding. It was almost a normal winter, but if one looked closely, one could see that everyone wore a look of fear. The relatives welcomed Roman and Halinka into their humble home, and told them that they would arrange for some help in transporting them to safety. The catch was that they could not travel together as they were too likely to be observed. It was decided that Roman would be the first to go.

Before he had left, Isidore had given Roman money which was carefully tucked into socks that were attached to a kind of half shirt without sleeves. Jadwiga had warned Roman to watch the money closely as it was almost all the family had left. She had been going to jokingly tell him to watch the money with his life, but she was afraid that he would take her literally. Instead, she had kissed him and simply asked him to be careful. Roman was taken by the relatives to the village marketplace, where a Polish man was given money to take him on to Czestochowa. These trips with strange escorts had become normal occurrences for the Wisniewski family, and Roman did not fear his escort this time. The plan had been arranged so that when Roman arrived in Czestochowa, he would go to a certain woman's address where he was to wait until he could join his Uncle Moryce and Aunt Hela. Fortunately for Roman and Halinka, their aunt and uncle were nearby in a town named Sandomierz which was located near the Vistua, or the large river in Poland. The couple had resided in Sandomierz since being kicked out of Kalisz along with so many others.

On the way to Czestochowa, the Polish escort took Roman by the collar and said that he knew Roman had money. He shook Roman and spoke harshly

with his face close to Roman's. "Listen you little Jew, I know you have money, and if you don't give it to me, I'll tell the Germans that you are a Jew and they will shoot you." Roman said he wanted to get off the cart, but the Pole kept driving on. Roman felt that he could outrun the Pole and so without any regard for the speed of the cart or his own safety, Roman jumped off and ran the far distance back to the village as fast as his legs could carry him. Roman heard the Pole shout out to him, but the man did not give chase. Halinka cried with happiness to see her brother. She told him that she was sure that the Pole was going to kill him. Their relatives were frightened by the experience with the Pole, and instead arranged for them to go to the border, together, by sled. The relatives were eager for Roman and Helina to be on their way, not only for the children's safety, but for their own as well. There was much discussion about what could happen if the Pole accused them of being Jews on the run, and all felt it would be better if there was no evidence of Roman or Halinka, should the Gestapo come for a visit. This time there were many people going to the border, and when Roman and Halinka arrived there, the German guards let them across without any difficulty.

Upon arrival in Czestochowa, Halinka asked directions to their contact's address and then she and Roman were directed to a room that had already been prepared for them, and where they were to stay for several days. Roman was not disappointed in the town of Czestochowa. Gosposia, a very devoted Catholic, had taught Roman in detail about the beautiful cathedrals and Roman was excited to see the famous cathedral. Halinka didn't want Roman to go sightseeing, but he ignored her warnings. She was terrified the whole while he was gone that he would be caught. Roman was not sure of the exact location of the cathedral, but he knew that Matkaboska Czestochowska (God's Mother) was not far from their location. Along the way in the direction he felt he should go, he stopped a girl for directions and she led Roman to its location. The young boy was awed by the beautiful sight and felt a moment of peace. When Roman returned to their room, Halinka was very angry and threatened to tell Isidore what Roman had done.

After two days, the Polish lady that had been paid to take them to their aunt and uncle in Sandomierz arrived on their doorstep. She instructed them to call her aunt and arranged to meet them at the train station. At the train station in Czestochowa, Roman and Halinka would use Polish identification papers, and they were therefore forced to take off their German clothes and don the clothes of a Polish peasant. Helina was not excited about the prospect of wearing the rough clothes, but Roman reminded her that the change could save her life. The uncomfortable train ride took the three people an entire day before they arrived in the old town of Snadomiersz.

This town, once home to a Polish king, like Czestochowa, was steeped in legend. The most well known tale was that of the canyon of the Jadwiga, named after the Queen of the Jadwiga. The legend of the queen related that her father wanted to be friends with the neighboring Germans, and so he arranged for her to marry a German knight. Steeped in grief, the queen chose instead to drown herself in the Vistula River. Halinka closed her eyes and fantasized about throwing herself into the Vistula. She was tired and she missed the security of her old life. She had often heard her grandparents tell tales of their time spent in war, but nothing they told could have prepared her for what it was really like. When she opened her eyes again, she saw nothing but a sea of wretched looking people. She wondered if she looked like that to them. People around them were dirty and scratching their skin and hair. It wasn't long before Halinka too found herself to be itchy and she wondered what filth had found its way onto her body. Halinka didn't have to wait long to find out, as she and Roman were full of lice when they got to Sandomierz. Their Aunt Hela and Uncle Moryce retrieved them from the station, and observed their condition. Hela and Moryce gave them baths and scrubbed and scrubbed at their bodies to rid them of the lice until Helina thought she would be bald.

Chapter 17

Once the children had left, Jadwiga was so filled with grief that she was unable to concentrate on her duties, and another person had to be assigned to supervise the dress-making department. With the children gone and Jadwiga in deep despair, Isidore tried to find relief by performing even more duties at the factory. One day, a steady customer, a Polish technician, came to the factory with an order for a new suit. He detected that Isidore was in some kind of deep depression and he asked some pointed questions. Once the Polish customer was satisfied as to what the root of the problem really was, he offered to supply Jadwiga with a false identity card for a sizeable sum of money. Isidore thought long and hard about the offer, and since it would mean that Jadwiga could join the children in Sandomierz, he decided to accept the Pole's proposition. For Jadwiga, it was not as easy a decision. She was torn between her love for the children and her love for her husband. She was also afraid that her actions would affect the other inmates of the ghetto should her absence be noted. But, Isidore managed to convince her that she should go to and take care of the children, who should always be the first priority as they were the future of the Jewish religion.

In preparation for her journey, Jadwiga first went to see Mrs. Ruszkowska, who had once hidden the children overnight. Jadwiga told Mrs. Ruszkowska about her plan to leave the ghetto and it was decided that Mrs. Ruskowska and her daughter would come to the ghetto the next day and move Jadwiga's household things to their own home. Jadwiga requested that Mrs. Ruszkowska hide their few important papers and a handful of other valuables, with the intention of returning them to Jadwiga when she came back to Kalisz. Next, Jadwiga went to visit Gosposia who was petrified when Jadwiga told her the plan and pleaded with Jadwiga not to leave the ghetto. But, the decision had been made and finally Gosposia promised to come to the ghetto and help Jadwiga finalize the preparations.

Jadwiga prepared the bundles for Mrs. Ruszkowska who would be coming in the evening, and then she made two bundles of clothing, one for her husband and one for her father in law, so that they might be ready for any evacuation order. She then packed a very small suitcase of her own and Gosposia was to carry it out of the ghetto the following morning along with Mrs. Ruszkowska. The plan was to meet Jadwiga at the turnpike later in the day. There was one last thing that Jadwiga wanted to do and that was to visit her parent's graves. It was risky and Isidore was uncomfortable with the idea, but she felt that needed to do so. When she was getting ready to leave, she noticed a *volksdeutsch* entering the ghetto and to her surprise she realized that it was the man who had agreed to smuggle the children out. Even after his ordeal at being shot at upon disembarking the train, he was still willing to do it again for a price. Jadwiga told him about her plan and she asked him to meet her at the railroad station the following day. Gosposia came for the suitcase and they set up a time to meet on the turnpike.

And then the time came to say goodbye to her father-in-law and her husband. Isidore was overwhelmed with the grief of their parting but assured Jadwiga that he was going to look for a replacement for him in the ghetto so that he could soon join her and the children. Jadwiga then removed her armband and the two Stars of David, and left the ghetto with her new identity card. Isidore was in possession of a permit to go outside the ghetto at certain times, and so was able to follow Jadwiga at a distance until he could safely go no further. He stood rooted in place until he finally lost sight of her.

On the way to the turnpike where she was to meet Gosposia, Jadwiga veered off towards the Jewish cemetery even though she knew how dangerous it was for her to be seen there. She knew the exact location of her parent's graves and by merely stopping at the entrance, she would be able to look at the graves and have a moment of silent prayer. She was stunned when her mind registered that the graves had been completely destroyed and that all the markers had been removed. She couldn't understand why the Germans would desecrate a

graveyard and she cried out in anguish. Her most urgent desire was to enter the cemetery and stand near what was once her parent's final resting-place, but knowing she wasn't allowed to be at the grave sight, she moved on. She was broken down with grief, and moved a little more slowly than she should have, but she finally reached the turnpike. There, waiting for her were Gosposia and Mrs. Ruszkowska. They handed Jadwiga her suitcase and hailed a carriage. Mrs. Ruszkowska then hurried away while Gosposia embraced and blessed Jadwiga and hung a holy medal around her neck. She told Jadwiga that it would protect Jadwiga from danger. Gosposia also promised that she would join Jadwiga at the railroad station.

Jadwiga paid the carriage driver when they arrived at the station, and she spotted the *volksdeutsch* immediately. He also noticed Jadwiga but did not approach since he had passed this way many times on other smuggling operations, and so was fearful that the guards would recognize him. Gosposia arrived separately soon after Jadwiga and the women sat together for five long hours without food or drink while they waited for the train to arrive.

The arrival of the train was a sad occurrence as Jadwiga and Gosposia were once again forced to say their good-byes. This time, there were no tears and drama, but a simple hug and wishes of good luck, much like one would give a relative after a long and satisfying visit. Gosposia watched as Jadwiga entered the train but Jadwiga was frightened of drawing attention to herself, so she kept her face averted, paying attention to no one. After a while, an elderly German officer entered the train. He approached Jadwiga and told her to enter a compartment and take a seat instead of standing in the passage. Jadwiga was momentarily overcome with distress and froze in place. But eventually she fearfully and reluctantly took a seat in a compartment. She was reassured when she noticed the *volksdeutsch* down the passageway. Jadwiga was glad that he could be a witness in case she was discovered and killed.

The train lurched out of the station and moved along without any incident. At one point Jadwiga had to transfer to another train and this time she entered a

crowded compartment and took the first available seat. Again she noticed the *volksdeutsch* and felt reassured. This trip also went smoothly until they neared the station at Klobuck.

Right outside of Klobuck station, three secret policemen entered the compartment. Jadwiga was frozen with terror as she knew of a recent incident where the husband of one of her friends in the ghetto had boarded a train, was recognized by the Gestapo as being a Jew, and was dragged out of the compartment and shot right there on the platform. Jadwiga was so concerned about her own welfare that she didn't notice the *volksdeutsch* put on his dark glasses. She later found out that he too was being hunted by the Gestapo. Apparently she and her children were not the only ones the man had been smuggling. It seemed that no one was fully safe from the Gestapo. On this particular instance with her heart racing and cold sweat dripping down her back, she knew that if the Gestapo were looking for any nervous Jews, her disguise would be seen through immediately. But, the police only walked up and down each compartment scrutinizing each and every face. To her amazement and relief, the police simply passed her by and left for the next compartment inspection. Soon thereafter the train stopped at Klobuck and was quickly emptied.

Jadwiga followed the *volksdeutsch* on the way to a Jewish home where she was to spend the night. As they moved along, they heard shots nearby. The *volksdeutsch* instructed Jadwiga not to make a sound, telling her that the police must have caught smugglers. They quietly sneaked through the town until they arrived at a dilapidated house. The *volksdeutsch* knocked on a window and gave his name to someone inside. The door was then slowly and cautiously opened by a thin, sickly looking man who led them to a small room with two occupied beds and three children sleeping on the floor. The *volksdeutsch* told Jadwiga that they would be spending the night there. The occupants of the two beds took to the floor offering the newcomers the beds, but Jadwiga did not want to sleep in unclean linens. So, she explained diplomatically that since she had to leave in a

couple of hours she might as well sit up in a chair while fully dressed. Jadwiga was exhausted and in spite of the discomfort of the chair she managed to doze off.

The owner of the home promised to get information for Jadwiga about getting to Czestochowa and he also told her that it would probably be better for her to stay with another family who often helped traveling people while she awaited the next leg of her journey. Jadwiga went to the home of this other family, and found that they were kind and considerate and welcoming. The family members helped Jadwiga to freshen up and gave her coffee and bread. This offering was astonishing since Jadwiga suspected that there was very little food left in the house. Jadwiga apologized that she had nothing left to offer them in return, but the family dismissed her concern. In fact, all they wanted was news from the Kalisz ghetto. Her host expressed his concern that probably all of the Jews in that area would have an unpleasant fate and did she know of anything. Jadwiga did not want to reveal too much information, so she simply stated that the fate of the Jews in Kalisz was as yet, unclear.

Shortly before noon on the following day, the owner of the other house arrived with information that at noon, while the guards were busy having their food, Jadwiga could follow the tracks leading out of town towards Czestochowa. He told her that she would have to run fast for at least one mile so as not to be noticed by the guards because if they saw her, she would be shot without warning.

Jadwiga's identification pass was valid in the Reich, but not in the Governorship and so he considered her situation quite serious. However, she had no alternative and at noon, she did as she was told and ran along the tracks knowing that her life depended on her speed. A million times her step was unsteady, but she never fell. The thought of being reunited with her children kept her going. Jadwiga ran hard and even harder until she reached her destination, a farm, and as instructed, entered a large cottage. There were many people in the room walking around, and she asked someone about a man that she was to meet

there. The man soon appeared and, with no questions asked, led Jadwiga outside where he locked her in a secluded shack. The man told Jadwiga that the boarder guards had a habit of dropping into the farm and that she would have to stay in the shack for the remainder of the day. Jadwiga sank down to the floor of the shack and sighed as she looked around. She didn't feel comfortable laying down on the dirty floor, so she propped herself against the wall of the shack and waited. Jadwiga didn't know if she had slept or not, but at some point late in the evening, Jadwiga was taken from the shack and given a meal and a bed in the cottage where she would spend the night. At daybreak, Jadwiga made sure she had her new identity card and left the farm on a carriage with a milkman who was bound for Czestochowa.

Jadwiga and the milkman reached Czestochowa in a short time and Jadwiga immediately went to see the leader of the ghetto. She asked for information concerning the Soiler family and was given their address without trouble. Jadwiga arrived at the address and found that the Soiler family lived in one cramped room that was divided into four parts for the six members of the family. Jadwiga was instantly afraid that she would not be offered temporary shelter and even if it was offered, where would she fit? Jadwiga identified herself to all the family members and then they discussed the situation in Kalisz in depth. The Soilers had heard rumors about the inmates being forced to flee for their lives, but they weren't sure if it was true. Furthermore, they were not sure if Jadwiga was who she said she was. After Jadwiga exhaustively explained the situation in Kalisz at the ghetto and her own reasons for going through this ordeal to find her own children, the Soliers agreed to help her, even though they were still unable to confirm her identity. The Soilers were appalled at what Jadwiga told them about the ghetto and they believed that the situation in Kalisz was far worse than that in any of the other ghettos. Jadwiga shared even more details about her family and their experiences, and when Jadwiga finished telling the Soilers her story, they all sat down to a simple meal that Jadwiga could hardly eat, as she was worried about getting to her children.

The sleeping arrangements in the room were already difficult for the Soilers and Jadwiga felt very guilty for complicating the situation even more. However, her exhaustion dictated that she accept their kind hospitality, and she instantly fell into a deep sleep on one of the few beds. Her intention was to rise at dawn and reach her children as soon as possible. The plan was a good plan, but it was not to be.

For the next several days, Jadwiga lay in a stupor in that very bed and due to some illness, was unable to raise her head or utter one word. The Soilers tended to Jadwiga as though she was a member of their own family, and when she finally had the energy to get up, they presented her with a plan to reunite Jadwiga with her children. They helped Jadwiga to find the woman whose name she was given and this woman told Jadwiga that the children had joined Jadwiga's brother Moryce and sister-in-law Hela in Sandomierz. Now, Jadwiga's goal was to find the best way of getting herself to Sandomierz.

Jadwiga modeled her plan after her husband's vision. She set out to learn a trade and she wrote to her brother in Sandomierz about her situation in Czestochowa, and her plan to leave. At this point travel was difficult and extremely expensive and Jadwiga would need to earn enough money for yet another false identity card that would enable her to safely reach Sandomierz. Simply by chance, Jadwiga met a cousin, D. Opieszynska. Her cousin was from Warsaw but now resided in the Czestochowa ghetto and told Jadwiga that she could sneak out of the ghetto with her to the Aryan part of the city where she would be able to earn extra money by teaching German. Jadwiga did not think twice about accepting her cousin's offer of low paying employment and the two began to weave a tale about Jadwiga's credentials. Jadwiga also began to assist her cousin in many other ways including arranging her living quarters more comfortably. She promised her cousin that once she reached Sandomierz, she would make every effort to have her join her there.

Jadwiga also met another young girl who was a native of Kalisz, who told Jadwiga about her existence in Lodz. In Lodz, the girl had shared a cell with Enia

and Geni Raczkowski, who were also Jadwiga's cousins. The girl described their cell as being full of filth and vermin and she told Jadwiga that the prison matrons regularly and brutally abused all of the inmates. The girl told Jadwiga that her cousin Enia had been close to the breaking point when the Jewish committee in Kalisz found out about the girls' confinement and had thus been able to get them out of Lodz and back to Kalisz. Jadwiga was horrified. She told the girl that she had sent countless packages to her cousins in Lodz and she would ask Enia to share the contents with other people including a very religious family also in residence there, by the name of Wartski. The girl shook her head and told Jadwiga that none of the packages had ever reached them in their filthy cell.

Several days passed before Jadwiga heard back from her brother Moryce as to the best way to reach them. Moryce had dispatched a Mrs. Skrzeszewska, who was returning to Sandomierz from a trip, and had been instructed to bring Jadwiga along with her. At first everyone was suspicious of the woman, questioning why a woman would risk such a hazardous trip. But the woman convinced them of her sincerity and they finally believed that her favor was genuine. The atmosphere then became jubilant and it was decided that she and Jadwiga would make the trip to Sandomierz the following morning.

The day of their departure was cold and windy. Jadwiga was told to dress warmly since they would have to transfer trains about midway through their journey and there was a long wait in the open station between trains. Jadwiga layered her clothes and made sure to wear her heaviest pieces so that her luggage would be light. Mrs. Skrzeszewska asked Jadwiga if she was ready, and the two set out for the station. The first leg of the trip was uneventful, but while they were waiting for the connecting train for Sandomierz, many people got excited and whispered that an inspection was imminent. Someone shouted that they could see the soldiers coming and almost all the people in the station grabbed their bundles and disappeared, including Mrs. Skrzeszewska who left Jadwiga frozen in fear and almost alone at the station. While Jadwiga was pondering what her next action should be, several Polish policemen entered the

waiting room. The few people left with Jadwiga lined up to have their baggage inspected. Jadwiga was not so concerned for her baggage to be inspected but she was concerned that under close scrutiny, her new identification card would not pass the inspection. When it came time for her inspection, the policeman hardly glanced at her bundle or her card, and he passed her by without further ado. She remembered her father's last blessing before he died when he said to her, "might she be standing in front of her enemies and they wouldn't even see her."

Several of the other passengers, including those who had scattered and hidden, were not as fortunate, as they were arrested for smuggling. One person that was recognized as Jewish was dragged out of the waiting room. Jadwiga and the others could hear his terrified screams as the police tortured him outside. At last the screams stopped and when the train arrived, Jadwiga boarded it without hesitation. She found a seat in a crowded compartment and was soon joined by Mrs. Skrzeszewska who had been hiding in another waiting room. Mrs. Skrezeszewska did not offer apologies or explanations, nor did Jadwiga expect her to. In these times of war, it was every man for himself.

When they arrived in Sandomierz, Mrs. Skrezeszewska brought Jadwiga to her brother's house. Mrs. Heinrych, her brother's mother-in-law, opened the door and threw her arms around Jadwiga. They clung to one another with great happiness. It was amazing how meeting even the mildest of acquaintances the greeting could be as intense as if it were long lost loves meeting again. Jadwiga and Mrs. Heinrych were still embracing when the children burst through the door and leapt into Jadwiga's arms. The feelings were indescribable and Jadwiga and her two children spent a long time simply holding one another.

Chapter 18

Moryce and Hela's apartment consisted of a room and a small kitchen with a small table squeezed between two beds and a medium sized wardrobe. Mrs. Heinrych scolded Jadwiga for her comment on the size of the apartment and reminded her that she should feel fortunate under the existing circumstances to have a roof over her head at all. Jadwiga apologized for her inconsiderate comment, promising that it wasn't meant as it sounded, but Mrs. Heinrych told Jadwiga to forget about it, and that maybe she reacted too strongly. Mrs. Heinrych told Jadwiga that Moryce was working at an employment agency and that Hela had found a position as an assistant at a dental office. Both women relaxed and while Mrs. Heinrych related to Jadwiga the happenings of the family, she prepared the evening meal. Jadwiga did not help with the chore on this night as she devoted herself to chatting with Mrs. Heinrych and visiting with the children. Before long, Jadwiga heard the footsteps of her brother and sister-in-law, and when they opened the door and saw Jadwiga they were so stunned that there was a moment of silence before all of them collapsed in joy. It amazed Jadwiga that she felt such security just being with her brother and sister-in-law, but then being with family was everything to Jadwiga.

Another of Jadwiga's brothers, Zygmund, who was a policeman, had traveled to Sandomerisz from Bialystok to join the family for dinner that night and to have an extended stay. He had been forced to leave his wife and child back in Bialystok in the Russian zone in order to visit Jadwiga and his niece and nephew, but he had wanted to see her so badly that he took the risk. Jadwiga poured out the story of what she and the family had been through in the months since she had last seen him and he, in turn, shared his news and stories with her. After the plentiful food was served, which Jadwiga observed did not seem to be a problem here, and after all the news had been shared among this family who had not been together for so long now, it was very late. But before everyone settled into their shared beds and in blankets piled on the floor, they decided to look the next day

[illegible]

[illegible]

for a larger apartment to accommodate them all. Now that they were together again, they were determined not to let one another go.

The weeks passed, Jadwiga's health was completely restored and the small family was blissfully happy just being together. Jadwiga wrote to her husband almost daily and patiently waited for his replies. Jadwiga also took over the household management from Mrs. Heinrych and also occupied herself with an outside job, working along side her daughter in a German brush factory. The job was extremely difficult and neither Jadwiga nor Helina received compensation, but it occupied their time and made them feel useful. They worked at the factory for some time before finding work in Mokoszyn digging potatoes for a German farmer. The work was just as difficult, but at least it was less regimented. Roman occupied himself by studying religion and basic schoolwork under the close supervision of Mrs. Glowinska, who was from Kalisz and was the sister of a Doctor Lubelski.

The preparation of the evening meal was always a very happy occasion with all the family together and Jadwiga's brother Moryce attempting to be a father figure to the children. The children often questioned Moryce's involvement, sometimes resentful of the way he would assume the position of authority as if he was, indeed, their father. Jadwiga explained that he meant well, and that it was important for him to help in raising them at this time. Jadwiga had to speak to the children about this topic several times before they accepted their uncle's new role in their lives.

Usually after dinner, friends of the family would come to visit and all would sit about discussing their experiences and recall their happier pasts. It almost seemed like a normal existence for all of them, except that so many of the tales were distressing, and so many family members and friends were so conspicuously missing. Roman, too, enjoyed telling stories and he always shared his and his sister's trip to Czestochowa. He told how they were exhausted and full of vermin and how when they were directed to a certain family, the family cared for them tenderly. Halinka liked to interject that the family helped them to

write to their uncle in Sandomierz. They would tell how eventually Jadwiga's brother was able to send Mrs. Skrzeszewska to retrieve the children and bring them back with her to Sandomierz. Halinka and Roman told this tale with graciousness and love for Mrs. Skrzeszewska. They were not aware that Mrs. Skrzeszewska did it for the money. The woman had been quite handsomely paid for her services by Jadwiga's brother. Roman would go on to tell everyone how wonderful his aunt and uncle had been to them, and how they had become their substitute parents. Roman always looked to Moryce when he said this, to indicate his acceptance of Moryce as his disciplinarian, guide and friend. Jadwiga informed the children over dinner one day that their father was anxious to join them and would do so as soon as he could find a new manager for the ghetto factory. As usual, he felt personally responsible for the safety of all the ghetto inmates, and could not in good conscience put his wants and desires before the communities.

Chapter 19

The Jews in Sandomierz enjoyed relative freedom. They would walk around town and although they had to wear the armbands, the treatment they received wasn't particularly bad. At that time in Sandomierz, the Jews escaped German notice because the Germans were far too busy chasing after the Poles for fear that they were collaborators with the resistance. Roman and Halinka knew the woman who lived downstairs from them well, and grieved for her when they discovered that her husband and two sons had been taken away for suspected resistance ties. The men were relocated to a place called Auschwitz and two weeks after their relocation the woman received a letter saying that all three had died of typhus. A rough cloth sack of dusty ashes had accompanied the letter.

Roman and his family constantly waited for anything, good or bad, to happen. Many weeks passed and little by little they became accustomed to their new plight in life. Food was still available, but it was more difficult to come by than when Jadwiga had first arrived. Roman constantly looked for odd jobs to take on to help pay for the food for his family, but in reality his aunt made enough money for all of them working as a dental technician. In spite of their fearful situation, they lead relatively pleasant existences during this period of time. Roman met and went out with girls, and his sister Halinka also developed a social life.

Two of the girls who became close friends with Roman had been born in the town. They were always showing Roman interesting places to see and explore, and his wild nature craved the knowledge. Stela and Zosia were members of the Goldberg family, people who were from the upper class segment of the community. Mr. Goldberg had been a lawyer before the war and he had since become the head of the association, or G*emina,* of the Jews because of his former position. This association was a small government that ruled over the Jews in this town. On the occasions where the Germans had requests or orders

they would go to the Gemina and they, in turn, would enforce the law. Among other things, Roman's friend Zosia discussed with him that awful day her father was shot in the back of the head by a Gestapo soldier over a man that went into hiding during one of the inspections. The man had gone into hiding and had never come out. The Gestapo had demanded that the man present himself for the inspection or they would kill Zosia's father right there and then. Roman had actually seen him lying in a pool of blood. Goldberg had been a tall and powerful man, and the sight of him lying in the street in that pool of blood was something Roman was sure he would never forget.

While most of their existence was quiet, there were some incidents that were unsettling. Hitler Youth were around and about, and one day they kicked Roman in the stomach and he fell to the ground unable to breathe. The youth group said they were learning how to box. Roman later heard that the youth group had gathered some young Jews and hung them upside down and used them for target practice. More weeks passed and at last Jadwiga received a letter from Isidore. He was still working as the manager of the factory and was still unable to find a substitute. Although the tone of his letter was upbeat, he mentioned more than once that he was tired, but that Jadwiga should not worry excessively about his condition. Isidore also wrote that they should watch for several packages that had been mailed by Gosposia, and he especially wanted Roman to notice the visor of a cap which was to be found in one of the packages. Jadwiga read the letter several times and then shared its contents with the rest of the family. Everyone expressed concern over Isidore's condition, but their concern was eclipsed by the thought of the coming packages. Everyone was so happy that they had something positive to look forward to, that that night they had an extra special dinner in celebration. While they all waited for the parcels, a second letter arrived from Isidore. This letter told them that Gosposia had been reported to the police for sending the packages to his Jewish family on his behalf. Gosposia was arrested and viciously tortured, but she held fast to her statement that the packages were sent to her own daughter, who also lived in Sandomierz.

Isidore wrote that at last she was released, and everyone rejoiced that she saved herself and Isidore from certain death. He also mentioned that there was a plan to relocate the factory in Kalisz to Lodz, and that if the move commenced, he would finally be free to join his family in Sandomierz. Isidore also expressed his deep regret that he would not be there soon enough to celebrate Roman's barmitzvah, as Roman was approaching his thirteenth birthday. He told of his hopes that Roman's new-found maturity would automatically have him assume responsibility for his mother and his sister in Isidore's absence. He thanked Jadwiga's brother and sister-in-law for their unselfish kindness and caring for his wife and children. He also enclosed the address of a Mr. Sawicki, a close friend of Isidore's, and advised Jadwiga to get in touch with Mr. Sawicki without delay. Isidore felt that he might be of assistance in relocating them should the need arise. Jadwiga wrote back to Isidore that they would stay in Sandomierz until he was able to join them there personally.

One of the duties that Moryce had taken upon himself was to teach Roman the required religious observance for his big day. Roman and Moryce grew closer through that process, and on the day of Roman's barmitzvah Jadwiga's brother stood at Roman's side for the rite. There were three other people there (friends of Moryce) two who stayed inside the room and one who guarded the door, as any ceremony for the Jews was against the law. The entire ceremony took 15 minutes. Although Jadwiga missed Isidore desperately, the day was good and Moryce said Roman performed well. Jadwiga was tearfully grateful to her brother as he stood in for her husband. Unbeknownst to Jadwiga, that very day a letter arrived from the *volksdeutsch* that helped them escape Kalisz. Jadwiga's sister-in-law intercepted the letter before Jadwiga could read it as it said that Isidore had been caught by the Gestapo and killed. There was much hidden grief and secretive discussions about what to do, but before anyone could decide, another letter arrived within a short period of time, this one from Isidore telling what had really happened.

The Germans had indeed decided to liquidate the ghetto and Isidore had made plans with the *volksdeutsch* to run away. Isidore was to go to the man's house, located next to a Jewish cemetery, and the *volksdeutsch* would help him. But, instead, the volksdeutsch told the Germans that Isidore, the factory leader, would be meeting him at his home with a plan to escape the relocation. The Gestapo, under the terrified observation of Gosposia, came and took Isidore away throwing him into a dungeon and threatening to shoot him. After Isidore had suffered in the dungeon for several days without food and drink, the *volksdeutsch* took all Isidore's possessions for his own. Then the Gestapo came into the dungeon, but instead of shooting him, they took him to Lodz. On that journey Isidore was able to write this letter to Jadwiga and one of the sympathetic Gestapo soldiers mailed it for him. Isidore was lucky that he had a network of contacts and friends and that some of the Gestapo policemen were good to him. There was also another woman on the journey who had a hidden radio that received BBC broadcasts who would tell Isidore what was going on. He felt that the war would soon bend in their favor, and he hoped it would all be over soon. Jadwiga became hysterical after reading the letter. Everyone kept trying to calm her, but they were not successful. Jadwiga was not only terrified for Isidore, but she was also very angry with the relatives as well. She could not understand how they could have withheld the precious letter about Isidore, and she demanded that no one ever again keep news from her, no matter how distressing it was. Roman, too, had heard some of what was going on and hated the *volksdeutsch* who turned Isidore into the Germans. Roman promised that he would seek revenge if he could. Hela also apologized to Jadwiga about the letter that she had confiscated, and more hysteria then ensued. Roman didn't know what to think but he decided that he, and all the girls he had befriended, should find a place to hide so that he could escape all this nonsense. After all, Isidore was still alive.

So, Roman and the girls went deep into the canyon and found a vast cave to hide in. There, Roman played hero to the girls who pretended to be lost and

[illegible]

[illegible]

helpless. Day after day the group went to the cave, played their games and talked about what to do should they ever have to hide for real. All this planning made Roman angry that the adults were just staying around waiting for what now seemed to be the inevitable. He knew he would have to devise a plan to make sure the girls had enough food, as he knew they would have to stay hidden in the cave since they looked Jewish. Roman didn't even go to school anymore, and no one seemed to care. His mother had become even more of a zombie now that she truly believed Isidore was fated to die, and Halinka walked around a mere empty shell. The talk amongst the adults was that the Germans would just keep relocating the Jews into camps and go no further in harming them. That reasoning made Roman angry and he told everyone he didn't believe the Germans would remain so benign. One family even threw him out of their home when he stated that the Germans were going to finish them all off. Roman became obsessed with wanting to get out and go into hiding. He wanted to go anywhere and hide and not just wait around to be shot in the back of the head like Mr. Goldberg. He told Jadwiga that he had big plans, and those plans did not end with him lying in the street in a puddle of blood. Roman was angry and he was through pretending that things were normal in their lives. He told his mother that they had to buy false papers and leave, and that if she didn't help with those plans, he would find a way to go by himself.

Shootings were becoming more frequent, and one day the Germans dumped the body of a man at the doorstep of his home, ordering the family to get rid of the corpse. Roman wanted to help and asked the family, who had two children, if he could stay with them in their time of grief. He spent the night comforting the family and then the next day, he went back to Jadwiga and informed her in no uncertain terms that the next time he left, he would not come back. Jadwiga panicked knowing that her son meant every word. While he was away the night before, she had actually thought that he had at last run away, and that she would never see him again. No one could console her that night. When

he returned and gave her one last chance to get out, she planned their escape without hesitation.

Meanwhile, the Germans decreed that the old people would be taken to the mountains where they would be more comfortable, but that the younger people would stay so they could continue to work. This was a familiar pattern and no matter how much Roman ran about warning anyone who would listen that the relocation of the old people was a step to their annihilation, no one seemed to listen to him. They said he was too young to understand the workings of the world, and that he had too active an imagination. And then, the black cars came to take the old people away, but the people never did go anywhere. The Germans would get out of the cars, load the old people in, open up a small side window, throw in a pellet of poison, close the window and then the old people would die right there in the cars. The Germans would wear gas masks while they emptied the bodies from the cars.

A few days passed while Jadwiga figured options for their escape, promising Roman that they would get out soon. News circulated that the Germans were creating a new ghetto for the Jews of Sandomierz in a place called Skarzysk, not too far from Sandomierz. Jadwiga told Roman that she was obliged to prepare everyone for relocation since her brother and sister-in-law worked, and as she busied herself with that task, Roman impatiently waited for her to be ready to escape. In concert with this news of relocation, the Germans opened a factory for the production of munitions and employed all the available Jews from Sandomierz and other towns as well, telling them that their commitment to work would be rewarded. Many eagerly signed on to be workers, but the Germans were becoming increasingly aggressive toward the population. Every day, more and more people were arrested and sent to prison for minor infractions.

Some of the Jews managed to escape the relocation and still others went into hiding. One prominent and prosperous Jewish businessman, knowing he was on the Gestapo's wanted list, escaped and stayed out of sight for some time.

Although some of his friends knew where he was hiding, no one betrayed him. Once again the leader of the Jewish community was held responsible for the man's disappearance and the Germans threatened him with death unless the hiding man gave himself up by a certain time. The leader knew where the man was hiding, and he firmly believed that the man would give himself up when he heard about the Gestapo threats. The leader continued on with his usual community affairs, oblivious to what was to come. His family and friends, Jadwiga's brother among them, begged the leader to go into hiding before the designated hour, since no one thought the business man would return. But the loyal leader could not be persuaded. At the designated time and to everyone's horror, the Gestapo took the leader out, made him stand with his face to a wall, and shot him three times. All of Jadwiga's family stared at the body lying in a pool of blood, along with all the other people who had watched this horrible display, and were disgusted that this wonderful leader had sacrificed his life for one man who ran away. Jadwiga then really pressured her brother more insistently to hurry and get the necessary papers for their escape from Sandomierz, because she agreed with Roman that if they stayed in the town, they would surely be killed. Several tense days followed, with bitter arguments about where the family should go. Roman hounded the group incessantly, and begged them to just make a decision before it was too late. Jadwiga was unable to contribute to the plan due to her overwhelming guilt that she had not allowed Isidore his wish to leave the Ghetto in Kalisz for Russia when they had the chance. Even though he had been the ghetto leader and had enabled many people to be saved from death, there was a time when he was willing to give up that position so that he could save his own family. Her poor decision haunted Jadwiga and she vowed to herself that she would do the best she could to save them.

Jadwiga's anxiety, brought on in part by Roman's incessant hounding, brought Jadwiga to a state of mental exhaustion. One night everyone was aroused by Jadwiga's shrieks. She had been having a nightmare, and told everyone when she was finally awake that in her dream Isidore was in a car

seated between two Gestapo officers. They were going to throw her husband, alive, into an open grave, and then bury him. She viewed her dream as an omen and she feared the worst. Jadwiga's condition was quickly deteriorating, but still, the family argued and wasted time trying to figure out where to go.

About a week later, Jadwiga received a card from her husband. The factory in the Kalisz ghetto had been transferred to the factory in the Lodz ghetto. He said that the same *volksdeutsch* that had guided Jadwiga to the children was now going to bring her husband to them. Jadwiga was frantic with what to do. She didn't know if she should stay and wait for Isidore's return, or if she should go now and save the family. And she wasn't sure if they left, whether they should share with anyone their destination so that if Isidore arrived, he would know where to find them. There did not seem to be an easy answer, and Jadwiga became more depressed. A few days later she received another card from Isidore that said he had arrived at the ghetto in Lodz and that he was reunited with his father and that both of them were well. Isidore's safety alleviated some of her depression, enough so that Jadwiga was able to write back to her husband. She wrote in the prescribed manor and tried to sound cheerful about what was going on, especially since they had all finally decided on a date when they would flee Sandomierz and travel to Warsaw.

Moryce was able to secure false birth certificates for the children and for Jadwiga. Roman was amused that his religion was stated as being Roman Catholic, and that on Jadwiga's papers her birthplace was listed as Warsaw, and her birth date as January 13, 1898. The papers had been forged in Warsaw, at great expense, and Moryce was told that the papers could easily be exchanged for other papers if that became necessary. Moryce also arranged for Jadwiga's appointment with a gentleman who was to give Jadwiga a *kenkarte*, a travel permit, so that she and the children could travel by train. These permits were only being issued to Poles in the Governorship, and certainly not to Jews, so they were very difficult to secure, but worth every effort. No one would suspect that a Jew, especially one traveling with a blond-haired, blue-eyed boy would have false

papers and a valid *kenkarte*. All of these arrangements took a full three weeks. During that time, Roman fretted every day, worried that they would be too late to get out, and Halinka tortured Jadwiga about what was being packed, screaming at her not to pack this and not to pack that. Roman had a brand new jacket that Isidore had given him that he planned to carry on his back with some other bundles. His sister, Halinka, ripped the coat from his hands and said, "where you are going you won't need it." Her attitude was that of defeat, but Roman ceased to argue with her anymore. He just went about his business waiting for the day of departure, angry with his sister for acting like she had given up. He also packed the coat.

The decision about what to pack and what to leave behind extended to members of the family as well. They decided to leave the mother of Jadwiga's sister-in-law with a farmer who they knew and trusted, and by giving him a large sum of money, he promised to take care of the older woman. The older woman was delighted to stay put, for the same reasons it was suggested she be left behind. Jadwiga could not promise that their trip would be a smooth one. Jadwiga and the children would be leaving first and Jadwiga's brother and sister-in-law would follow after the arrival of a dentist named Swiderski, who was a colleague of Helana's from Warsaw. This man would assist them in their resettlement in Warsaw. The time came for Jadwiga to meet with the man who was to provide papers and who knew a former army lieutenant who was to supply Jadwiga with the *kenkarte*. The price for the *kenkarte* was one thousand Zloty. To pay, Jadwiga had to sell everything her housekeeper had sent to her. Jadwiga's contact had told the soldier that Jadwiga was a refugee from the Third Reich and that she was a very sick woman who was unable to communicate with him directly and personally. The go-between took down the necessary information, including fingerprints from Jadwiga, so that he could give them to the lieutenant in her stead. The soldier never knew, nor did he suspect, that any of these people he was assisting were Jewish. That task completed, Jadwiga then arranged for the help of a neighbor, an Aryan, who was to travel with them to

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Warsaw, again for a price. Their money was rapidly running out, and Jadwiga knew that if they were to make a success of this move, they would not get another opportunity to make it right anytime soon.

Jadwiga packed three suitcases, one for her and one for each of the children. She also packed cases for her brother and sister-in-law so that they would be ready in case of an emergency departure. What meager items she had left, she took to Mrs. Michalski, an Aryan neighbor from her own hometown, with the promise that she could collect them on her safe return to Sandomierz. It was late 1942, and the war had been ravishing Jadwiga's life for three years. She knew that if it were not for her children, she would have given up. Jadwiga thought it was funny that for the first time in a long time they were making their own choice to relocate, but it was fraught with just as much stress and anxiety as any German order.

Chapter 20

At last the *kenkarte* came, and Jadwiga and her two children were finally ready for departure. They were getting ready to leave for the train after making final preparations and double-checking their belongings when Jadwiga's daughter, Halinka, announced that she would not be going with her mother and her brother. Halinka said that she made this decision because she was worried that Jadwiga looked too Jewish and that they would surely be caught. Instead, she planned to stay with Jadwiga's brother and sister-in-law and travel with them at a later date to Warsaw. Jadwiga and Roman looked at Halinka with amazement, too stunned to say anything immediately. Roman was very angry and did not speak to Halinka, but he did question why they had obtained false papers for her when she wasn't going to use them. Jadwiga was frantic over Halinka's decision, but there was no time left to argue, and Moryce and Hela pledged to care for their niece faithfully until they were all reunited once again in Warsaw. No one tried to talk Halinka into going, and Roman was so intent on getting out, and by this time so desensitized and disgusted with everything anyway, that he didn't even say good-by to his sister. So Jadwiga and Roman left without Halinka, arrived at the railroad station, boarded the train and made their escape trip to Warsaw without further incident. Roman and Jadwiga were thus the first people to get out of the Sandomierz Ghetto. Mother and son never discussed Halinka's decision.

Once they arrived in Warsaw, the two hailed a carriage that would take them to their destination, a friend's home on Wylcza 49. Horse driven carriages, similar to rickshaws, were lined up in front of the railroad station waiting for their fares. Jadwiga and Roman hailed one, and as they got on the carriage and it moved on its way, a Polish policeman serving the Germans jumped on to the running board and directed the driver to the nearest police station, located directly across from the railroad station. The policeman looked at Jadwiga and said to her, "I think you're Jewish." Jadwiga answered back, "What are you talking

about, don't be ridiculous?" While this harrowing exchange was taking place, the rickshaw's driver rifled Jadwiga's and Roman's bundles and the hideous man stole a scrapbook that Roman's father had given him with postmarks from objects that his father had sent from around the world. Mother and son were so engaged in the vicious exchange with the policeman before them, that they didn't notice what the man was up to.

At the station they were ushered into a large room filled with several policemen, and the captain told them they were suspected of being Jewish. The Aryan woman who was traveling with them was lead to the komissioner's office and then sometime later Jadwiga was lead to the same office. The komissioner hammered questions upon her, even asking her, "What are God's three commandments?" Jadwiga believed in the Ten Commandments from the Bible, but as a Jew did not understand what the komissioner wanted. Jadwiga was to find out sometime later from a Catholic priest that the question concerned the Catholic's version of God's image of the Holy Trinity and that was faith, love and hope. Interestingly enough, Jadwiga was not penalized for her ignorance, since very few Catholic Poles were able to answer the questions correctly in the first place. Jadwiga was then ordered to produce her *kenkarte*, and without much scrutiny, the policeman seemed satisfied with it. The officer told Jadwiga to wait in the next room with her son for further orders.

Jadwiga expected to find the Aryan neighbor in this room, but she was no where to be found. She feared that the woman had implicated them and that that was the reason the police still detained them. Jadwiga went over the many scenarios of what could befall them, and right then resolved to save Roman. She whispered to him to run out of the building and keep running until he was safe. She was terrified that the police would take Roman's pants down and see that he was circumcised. The room they were being held in was small, and the room directly behind them was like a jail with bars on some of the windows. Roman jumped up, ran through an open window and was out of the building like a bolt of lightning. But unfortunately, a policeman observed the escape and recaptured

Roman. The policeman then hit Roman twice in the head and dragged him prone on the ground by his collar so roughly, that the skin on the boy's knees was peeled back and blood was gushing out all over. Jadwiga saw the police try to hit her son again and pleaded with him to stop. She was told to shut her mouth and she, too, was roughly handled. Both were then thrown into a cell along with other prisoners and were told that after an action like that, the komissioner might never let them out. The guard then ran his keys up and down one of the cell bars and leered at Jadwiga. It was fortunate for the policeman that he took no other action, as Roman would have tried to kill him for it.

The cell was disgusting and most of the inmates were bedraggled women, seemingly of low repute who quarreled and shouted at each other using obscene language. Roman took a lively interest in the vulgar exchanges and questioned the meaning of the words to Jadwiga's great distress and embarrassment. One of the women took pity on Jadwiga's situation and advised Jadwiga to bribe her way out of prison. The woman obviously thought Jadwiga was Jewish, and said as much. She told Jadwiga to give the bribe a try since she had nothing to lose. The woman said that either the police would kill her for attempted bribery or that the Gestapo would kill them for being Jewish. Jadwiga thought that the woman had a valid point, and so resolved to try the bribe. She had a moment's fear, however, thinking what if they took the money Moryce had given her and then locked her back up? Or, what if they took her money, killed her and left Roman with nothing? She had to try no matter the outcome. She could drive herself insane with all of the ifs.

To Jadwiga's amazement, the guard that she approached immediately unlocked the door and led Jadwiga and her son back to the kommissioner's office. The kommissioner told them that for five thousand Zlotys he would set them free without any questions asked. She was stunned at the amount of money he requested and she told him that she had only three thousand Zlotys sewn into her undergarments. She told him that she would go to the lady's room to extract it and then hand it over to him. At first he acted furious, but then he

agreed to the amount along with Jadwiga's gold watch. He also warned her to say nothing about this transaction to anyone and advised her to be on the alert for the police in any other part of the city.

The kommissioner then brought in another policeman and told him to lead Jadwiga and the boy out of the police station immediately. Their baggage items were delivered to them when they left the station, and although one of their packages was missing, Jadwiga thought it best not to complain. She also didn't want the policeman to know that they had a relocation plan and so she asked him where they should go. He told them to go to a hotel on a street not far from the station. They actually followed his directions, but when they got there they were told that the hotel was filled up. The proprietor told them that at the end of a corridor, all the way down the hall, there was an area where the hotel could place a cot if they wished to stay there. They were grateful for anything, and told the proprietor they would take the area with the cot. The experience at the police station had exhausted them and they thought it best to visit their friend the next day, after they had rested for the night.

One of the hotel guests invited Jadwiga to play a game of cards. Jadwiga accepted as long as the door could be left open so that Roman could observe Jadwiga's safety. The man shuffled the cards eagerly, apparently grateful to have a card playing companion. He fell into an easy rhythm of shuffling and dealing and he and Jadwiga struck up a friendly conversation. After a bit of talking, the man's attitude started to change. His eyes narrowed slightly and he asked increasingly personal questions that Jadwiga did not feel comfortable answering. He finally stopped the card game and told Jadwiga that there was a very large ghetto in Warsaw and that the Jews were running out of it. He said he thought that Jadwiga was Jewish and had run away from the Warsaw ghetto. He told Jadwiga that she had to give him money and if she refused, he would call the Gestapo and have her arrested. Jadwiga laughed and said he was ridiculous. She also said, loudly enough for Roman to hear, that she wouldn't stay in such a

[illegible]

[illegible]

place a moment longer. She and Roman took their parcels and dramatically stormed out of the hotel without a word to anyone.

Once out in the street, they hired another carriage and directed the driver to the address of Mr. Sawicki, her husband's friend who lived on Wylcza 49. Jadwiga worried about just dropping in on the Sawicki family, but Roman convinced her that the man would help them, and that they should follow Isidore's advice. They rang the bell but, for what seemed like an endless passage of time, the door remained closed. Jadwiga was ready to turn away when the door finally opened. Mr. Sawicki immediately recognized Jadwiga and his face mirrored his feeling perfectly. He was stunned and very upset at their appearance on his doorstep, but immediately ushered them into his house, glancing left and right down the street to see if anyone had observed their arrival. He guided them to a small room in the back and drew the curtains so that they would not be seen from the outside. Mrs. Sawicki then joined them and was just as agitated as Mr. Sawicki by their visit. Although they were deeply concerned about the consequences of having these two people in their home, Mr. and Mrs. Sawicki agreed to feed Jadwiga and Roman, especially since they looked like they were near collapse.

There was silence in the room as Jadwiga and Roman ate, but the silence was out of respect for their deplorable state. Mr. and Mrs. Sawicki recognized the exhaustion in their faces, and knew the situation must be very grave for Jadwiga and Roman to ask for their help so unexpectedly. While Mr. and Mrs. Sawicki remained quiet, they were actually dying to hear what events had brought these two forlorn travelers to their home. While Jadwiga and Roman continued eating, the couple's eldest daughter entered the room and stopped dead in her tracks. Jadwiga remembered that this young woman disliked Jewish people. As though the girl wanted to confirm this feeling, she began to openly express her disapproval of her parent's willingness to harbor these two Jews, thereby endangering their own lives. She urged her parents to order the Jews out of the house. Mr. Sawicki was deeply ashamed by his daughter's outburst, as

Jadwiga's husband had always been a true and loyal friend to him. Many times Isidore had saved Mr. Sawicki from financial ruin in his embroidery factory by extending loans without the necessity of collateral. Isidore had also traveled to Warsaw to bring Mrs. Sawicki's jewelry and some valuable clothes that they had left behind in Kalisz when they had moved to Warsaw. Mr. Sawicki knew that Isidore had risked his own exposure to bring these things to the Sawicki family. Now he felt it was his turn to prove to Isidore that he too could be a trusted and loyal friend. When Mr. Sawicki finished berating his daughter and his wife, who had begun to express agreement with the daughter, for their attitude, the two became subdued and a little friendlier to Jadwiga and Roman. The daughter even pressed Jadwiga to describe her experiences.

Mr. Sawicki told Jadwiga that she was very fortunate that the Polish police had let her go since people all over Warsaw were being arrested and abused. Mr. Sawicki himself had been stopped on the street and was thrown into jail, accused of being a Jew. But, he was able to prove to the police that he was not and was released. The time was getting late and Mr. Sawicki suggested that Jadwiga and Roman go to a hotel at 21 Widok St. where he thought they would be comfortable for the night. He warned them to be on the alert to avoid a confrontation with the Police or any civilians. It was clear that although he graciously fed them this meal, he could not extend his hospitality any further. There were inspections constantly, and he had no place to hide his friends. Jadwiga and Roman both recognized Mr. Sawicki's dilemma, but Jadwiga could see that Roman was angry and she prayed that he would not say anything unkind to Mr. Sawicki or his family. She feared that if he did, the daughter would turn them in. Jadwiga was relieved when Roman did not speak out. Jadwiga and Roman left for the hotel, but since they were not acquainted with that part of the city, it took them longer to get there than they expected. When they finally did arrive at the address, there were two hotels on the street.

They entered the first one and Jadwiga inquired about a room for the night. The clerk scrutinized them carefully and asked many personal questions,

scowling all the while. The clerk then named a price for the room that was much too high for them. Jadwiga had to admit to the clerk that they would be unable to pay that amount, and the clerk simply smiled. As they left the hotel, Jadwiga noticed a sign for a moderately priced boarding house nearby. They took down the address and located the home quickly. They rang the bell and a tall slim elderly lady answered the door. She told Jadwiga and Roman that the only vacancy was a small room in the back. It was a tiny space, but at least they would have a place to sleep with a roof over their heads. Roman fell asleep instantly from exhaustion, but Jadwiga was unable to fall asleep and she tossed and turned on the bed. She was not in the bed more than 15 minutes when her body began to burn. Jadwiga realized that the bed was filled with bed bugs, but she was so exhausted she couldn't get up, so she spent she spent a sleepless night rooted to the revolting bed.

Jadwiga lay awake all night long, making plans to have Halinka brought to Warsaw immediately. When dawn broke, she left the boarding house and located her traveling companion, the Aryan woman, and was able to persuade the woman to return to Sandomierz to retrieve Halinka. After Jadwiga promised to pay the woman money, the woman departed. Jadwiga then returned to the boarding house and investigated the other rooms, finding that they were all disgusting in appearance. During her inspection, she also discovered that the other individuals in the house were suspicious characters. One of these suspicious characters was a young man who wore a railroad motorman's uniform. He appeared to be unemployed as he was always in his room, located next to Jadwiga's, doing nothing but quietly reading. Roman was curious about this man who wore the uniform and he and Roman quickly became companionable. Jadwiga realized that they were going to have to stay in this filthy boarding house for some length of time. So, with nothing else to do and the need to make their existence more comfortable, she washed the sheets and beat the bed, and cleaned the room from top to bottom. Following careful cleaning, Jadwiga was satisfied that the room was fit to be occupied. It smelled better, the bed no longer

bit back when one lay down, and she thought she might even be able to sleep in it. And so their routine was settled in this tiny, but clean space.

One day Roman asked Jadwiga's permission to accompany his new friend to a neighborhood cinema. Jadwiga did not want Roman out of her sight for fear that he would be accosted as a Jew on the streets of Warsaw, but she let him go anyway. With his blond hair and blue eyes, he would in all reality probably be quite safe, as had already been demonstrated. As soon as the two young men left the building, two of the occupants of other rooms in the house searched the motor man's room. Several other occupants of the house soon joined the search and Jadwiga could hear the group whispering. Even the landlady entered the room and she, too, participated in the secret consultations with the other occupants. They conversed in French, a language Jadwiga did not understand, and the longer the conversation went on, the more uneasy Jadwiga felt. No matter her lack of understanding of the French language, she knew that this young man was in trouble and she feared that Roman's association with him would implicate them. When Roman and his new friend returned from the movies, Jadwiga told the man about the search and she urged him to pack up and clear out. Jadwiga understood then that he was Jewish. His attempts at hiding, just as she and Roman were, were dashed, and it terrified Jadwiga how easily she, too, could be found out. The man packed up and left immediately, but not without notice. One of the boarders observed the escape and followed the young man, but he soon returned to the house in frustration. The boarder was very angry at his failure to capture the railroad man and openly blamed Jadwiga for the young man's escape. He accused her of being related to the railroad man since she had let Roman go out with him without reservation. Jadwiga told him that of course she didn't know the man. She simply thought it was better for her young son to go to the movies with him than by himself. Jadwiga's delivery of the explanation satisfied the boarder, and he backed away from Jadwiga, shaking his head. Jadwiga sucked in a deep breath and thought how Roman would be the death of her even though he was giving her a reason to live.

The day following the railroad man's escape, Jadwiga noticed that a new lodger, a woman with Semitic features, was occupying a small room next to the kitchen. The woman was talkative and inquisitive, and was soon on friendly speaking terms with everyone living in the boarding house. The resident that accused Jadwiga of aiding in the young man's escape asked both the new tenant and Jadwiga to join in a card game the other apartment occupants were playing. Jadwiga declined, offering that she had a headache, but the young woman joined in eagerly. Jadwiga backed away from the table, but watched the game intently, noting that the man lost each and every hand. He was taking great pains to convince the woman that she was the better card player. Jadwiga had an uneasy feeling about the situation. On impulse, she whispered to Roman to leave the area and return to Mr. Sawicki's home. She instructed him to tell Mr. Sawicki about the incident with the motorman, and ask to please stay the night. She also told Roman, while keeping an eye on the game at hand, to tell Mr. Sawicki that they had plans to leave Warsaw the next morning.

Roman slipped out of the room and Jadwiga prayed that he would be safe. Soon thereafter, she, too, left the room and returned to her own room. Lying down, she turned out the light and settled into bed but remained fully dressed, as was her habit. She was worried about what could happen to Roman and could only pray that he would be safe.

Meanwhile, Roman had run out of the apartment building and down into the main street. The boy was so distressed that he hadn't paid attention to the direction in which he was going. He felt like he had been running for an hour when he saw a man on the street and he asked the man for directions to Mr. Sawicki's street. The man said he was very far from his destination but that since he was headed in that direction he would take Roman there personally. They chatted amicably on the trip, and the distance was soon covered. When they got close, the man asked Roman the actual address and offered to lead him to the door, but Roman declined, fearing that he could not trust the man. The man shrugged, bid Roman goodbye, and left to be on his way. Roman waited in

place, pretending to adjust his shoe until he was sure that the man had gone. Roman then knocked on Mr. Sawicki's door and to Roman's relief, Mr. Sawicki was delighted to see him. Roman told Mr. Sawicki he was afraid that by this time his mother had been killed and that it was all over. He was now crying uncontrollably and could barely relay the message Jadwiga had given him. Mr. Sawicki kindly and calmly told Roman not to worry. He said that he would give the apartment tenants money for Jadwiga's freedom if she were, indeed, in trouble. Those people were most probably blackmailers and he explained to Roman that they were more interested in her money than her life.

Mr. Sawicki said he would also take Roman to Mr. Sawicki's own sister's home for safe keeping, but that Roman should not tell her he was Jewish, as Mr. Sawicki's sister did not like the Jews. Mr. Sawicki planned to tell her that Roman was a friend of his son, and that circumstances were such that he would need to stay there overnight. They walked the few short blocks with Roman drying his eyes, trying desperately to be a mature man, and then they were at her house. Mr. Sawicki's sister greeted them warmly, fed Roman a hot meal and got him into bed. Roman started crying the second the kind woman left the room, and he cried all night, soaking the pillow. He was certain his mother had been killed and that he was now completely alone.

Jadwiga, now alone, spent long hours trying to get some sleep, but was kept awake by thoughts about her son. She was praying for Roman's safe trip and shelter for the third time when she became aware of the loud voices next door to her room. Jadwiga listened carefully, and surmised from the woman's loudly shouted goodbye that the card game had finally come to an end. She was surprised though, when the conversation continued and it sounded like a man was making threats against the woman. Soon, however, Jadwiga became concerned about who the threats were actually directed against. She feared that the threats were directed at her and that she herself was in danger. Moments after her realization, she heard footsteps in the hall and suddenly her door was thrust open, and a flashlight was shining in her face. It was the man who had

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

accused her of helping the motorman escape. He was talking quickly and waving the flashlight back and forth in her face. Jadwiga was frightened, but she put on a calm front. She pretended to be half asleep and waved her hand at the man. He made an overture to Jadwiga, and when she did not respond, he became very angry and demanded to see her *kenkarte*. When she refused to turn it over to him, he simply reached out, grabbed her purse and searched until he found the *kenkarte*. He took some time reading it and then copied it into a notebook he pulled from his pocket. He then proceeded to inform Jadwiga that the Gestapo would richly reward him for the Jews he could expose, but that his silence could be bought for a high price. Jadwiga was immediately sickened by this blackmailer's demands and had to control the bile that rose in her throat and made her feel like she was going to be vomit all over everything. The man leaned over her in the bed and emptied the contents of Jadwiga's purse all over. He then proceeded to rip out the satin lining of the purse. Her earrings, rings and a brooch were among the items that were revealed. Those, along with Jadwiga's wedding ring, were shoved into the man's pocket. Then he demanded that she turn over diamonds, which he claimed to know from experience, all Jewish women hid in their bosom. Jadwiga denied having any diamonds, but the man did not believe her and reached out to rip open the front of her dress. In doing so, he exposed the medal that Jadwiga's housekeeper had given to her and told her to wear always. It was the medal that had Holy Mother Mary of Czestochowa imprinted on it, the very one that Gosposia had said would bring Jadwiga luck.

The man was momentarily stunned at the sight of the medal and he ended his attack as quickly as he had started it. He agreed that Jadwiga was indeed a Christian and a Catholic. But he still believed that she had helped the motorman escape, thus preventing the Gestapo from arresting the men. The offense, the man told Jadwiga, was a very grave offense and he told her that just because she was a Christian did not save her from the wrath of the Gestapo. The man had again become as angry as he had been before he saw the medal, and he leaned in closely to Jadwiga's face as he spoke. Adding more accusations to his list, he

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

accused her of lying about Roman being her son, stating it was his belief that the boy was really a Jew, in spite of the way he looked, whom Jadwiga had befriended. He knew that she was helping to keep him from the Gestapo and said that he had proof. The very fact that Roman was not present and that Jadwiga was not concerned or searching for him made it obvious that the young boy was hiding. Jadwiga denied the accusations and informed the man that Roman was merely visiting friends and would be returning soon, although she wasn't sure when. Roman's friends could talk him into staying too long and then he would be beyond the curfew and would have to stay overnight with his friends. Jadwiga was talking quickly, hoping that the man would not be able to formulate a thought while she was busy trying to explain her situation. But, it was not a successful campaign. The man told her that he was not convinced, but that if she didn't tell anyone about his taking her jewelry, he would keep his mouth shut when the Gestapo arrived the next morning at eight o'clock. He told Jadwiga to leave the house early, and meet him at a coffee shop that was located on Marszalkowska Street, but that she would have to bring an additional three thousand Zlotys. Jadwiga was outraged at his proposition, and she was not sure if he would be angrier if she said yes or if she refused. So, she stayed silent. He took her silence as acceptance and again tried to make advances. Jadwiga threatened to scream. This he did not want, as he was concerned that others in the house would find out about the jewelry and his further blackmail proposition. He backed out of the room, telling Jadwiga to meet him at the prescribed time and place the next day. His final look at Jadwiga indicated that he expected to see both her and the Zlotys.

Jadwiga did not feel that she had a choice in the situation. But before she did anything, Jadwiga told the woman next door, who she suspected was Jewish, about the Gestapo arrival the next day. The woman's calm exterior could not completely hide her initial fear and then her gratitude, but Jadwiga did not want to stay and speak with the woman. Jadwiga returned to her room and quickly packed her meager belongings, sitting in wait for the hour when she would leave

[illegible]

[illegible]

the house. She was concerned about the supposed arrival of her daughter, Halinka, on the following day. She tried to figure out what should be done, as Halinka would not find Jadwiga or Roman at the boarding house. Jadwiga hoped the woman that was bringing Halinka to Warsaw would simply take her to Mr. Sawicki when it was discovered that Jadwiga and Roman were not at the boarding house. It was a chance she would have to take.

Chapter 21

The next morning, much to Jadwiga's relief, the blackmailer was nowhere to be found. But, when the carriage had arrived for Jadwiga's trip to Mr. Sawicki's house she had an overwhelming feeling that something dreadful had happened to her son. Her heart raced and her palms were sweaty the entire trip. When she arrived at the Sawicki house she was out of her senses with fear. She paid the carriage driver and impatiently and desperately waited until it had gone from sight before she approached the door to the house. Mr. Sawicki's younger daughter answered and invited Jadwiga to lunch. The girl was kind and compassionate in her invitation, which struck Jadwiga as odd since it seemed such a pre-war natural offering. For a brief minute, Jadwiga's hunger kicked in and she considered having lunch with the family, but soon concluded that the brevity of her visit would have a direct effect on her safety. So she politely declined and asked to see Roman. Jadwiga knew from the girl's calm invitation that nothing had actually happened to Roman, and Jadwiga felt her distress lift. She explained that she could not stay for lunch, that she and Roman had to flee Warsaw immediately and that her plan was to go on to Krakow. There they would see a woman who had helped Jadwiga nurse Roman back to health when he had been quite ill some time in the past. This woman, too, although she was not Jewish, had been thrown out of Kalisz, left to find shelter without help. She understood what Jadwiga and Roman were dealing with, and so was also sympathetic to the plight of other Jews. When Jadwiga had gotten word to the woman of their predicament, she agreed to help without hesitation. After all, she told Jadwiga, why would I have helped save the little boy's life so many years ago, to let him die now? Jadwiga explained to Sawicki's daughter about Halinka's expected arrival the following day. Jadwiga asked that the Sawickis send Halinka on to Krakow, as she would no doubt come to this house when she discovered Jadwiga and Roman's absence. Sawiki's daughter assured Jadwiga that she would personally see to Halinka's welfare.

Roman had returned from Mr. Sawicki's sister's house earlier and entered the room upon hearing his mother's voice. But, before he could properly greet her and share with her his relief that she was still alive, Jadwiga told him that they were going to be leaving immediately for Krakow. Roman had heard that tone before in his mother's voice and he understood better than her words had conveyed that it was time to leave. Roman graciously thanked the family for their help, picked up his and his mother's bags and they left.

Jadwiga had not thought to have the carriage driver return to pick them up, and soon realized her mistake. Due to the scarcity of horses, there was a shortage of carriages in Warsaw. Roman searched for a driver, but the two had great difficulty in finding one so early in the morning. Too much time was passing but Jadwiga noticed that a rickshaw type conveyance was nearby. Jadwiga and Roman were able to hire it quickly, and, with their bags tucked safely in their laps, traveled the distance to the railroad station. As was her custom, Jadwiga feared being stopped by the Gestapo, and at the station, she was once again on the alert for any suspicious situations. Roman told her to stop worrying as she looked like a scared Jewish woman with something to hide. While Jadwiga understood, she could not stop her fear, nor could she change any expressions her face might convey.

The train bound for Krakow pulled into the station not long after their arrival and she and Roman hurriedly found seats. The last twenty-four hours had been horrendous, so much so that Jadwiga had stopped thinking about the few morsels she had eaten over the last two days. Neither Jadwiga nor Roman thought to bring food from the Sawickis or even to offer to purchase food from anyone on the train. Now, hunger was heightening both Jadwiga and Roman's anxiety, but neither one was able to talk about the situation. Silence, as usual, was how they dealt with one another in these situations. Jadwiga did not pay attention to the time the train was due to arrive in Krakow, and was alarmed when she noted the time. They had arrived in Krakow at two o'clock in the morning, which was well past the curfew. Jadwiga cried out in anguish that she couldn't

believe that their lives could be any worse. Roman wanted to find their contact immediately, but Jadwiga did not want to risk traveling the streets at such a dangerous time, and so they decided to stay at the station until daylight.

While they sat on the impossibly hard benches, trying in vain to get comfortable, a young boy cautiously approached them. The boy questioned them for a moment and then offered them a place to sleep for the night, not far from the station. Jadwiga was instantly suspicious that it was a trap but in spite of her misgivings, the boy's offer seemed a better alternative to spending their time completely exposed at the station. They followed the boy into the night. The group traveled quite a distance, their exhausted and hungry bodies pushing to their limit to make the trip, before the boy entered a building and knocked on a third floor apartment door. A man opened the door, whispered with the boy and then asked for Jadwiga's *kenkarte*. The man acted like he was suspicious of the woman and child, and Jadwiga casually asked about the price of a room. The man's demeanor softened at the mention of money and he quoted an amount. Jadwiga paid for two days, in advance, hoping that the gesture would further gain his confidence. He seemed pleased by this offering and led them to a small, clean room. The little cubby was ideal for Roman and Jadwiga's needs except for the fact that it was unheated. It was freezing weather, and without thoughts for food, Jadwiga and Roman dove under the covers and tried to warm themselves. Both were asleep before their bodies registered whether or not their goal had been accomplished.

At dawn, Jadwiga was startled awake by a hard knocking. Someone was moving around in the room next to theirs and Jadwiga could hear them whispering. She was unable to understand much of what was being said but she did make out that the topic of conversation involved a special room. Thinking that the discussion was about the room that she and Roman were in, Jadwiga awakened her son and told him that they were trapped and had to escape. Roman was a zombie, and didn't want to get up. He was tired physically and mentally. And he was tired of Jadwiga's constant fear and panic. He refused to

live as though every moment was his last, and he did not understand why she could not do the same. He simply fell back to sleep, not knowing if he had said those words to Jadwiga or if he had just dreamed them. Jadwiga rapidly prayed that God would protect them, and gave herself up to what fate might await them. Jadwiga lay on her back as stiff as her spine could hold her body and waited. Her eyes were open so wide as she lay in place, they dried out several times before she remembered to blink them. Minutes and then hours passed agonizingly slow and long. As dawn passed and the morning came, Jadwiga was prepared to face their death. But, by eight o'clock no one had burst in on them to take them away. Roman woke up refreshed, and told Jadwiga how silly she had been for staying up all night. He remarked that her eyes looked raw and still reflected fear. He told Jadwiga that her constant worry would make them vulnerable to suspicion, and that she needed to control the fear or they would surely be found out. Jadwiga splashed water on her face to refresh herself. They left the room, hoping that breakfast would be made available to them.

Upon entering the foyer, they heard a conversation between the landlord and some other men that was taking place in the kitchen behind a closed door. Jadwiga heard a woman's voice saying that they must speak quietly or the people in the house might learn that they were smugglers. With a tremendous sense of relief, Jadwiga realized that she and Roman had nothing at all to fear from these people. Sitting at the large table, they ordered breakfast and ate heartily for the first time in days. Roman did not want to stay indoors that day and decided to go into town without Jadwiga. He knew that one of Isidore's many friends lived nearby and it was to this man that Roman decided to pay a visit. Roman felt that he would be less conspicuous if he traveled alone, and so he left without Jadwiga, who was delighted to stay in her room. Several hours later he returned with his father's friend, who was delighted to see Jadwiga. After a long visit, Jadwiga asked for his advice, and he suggested that they should move into a storage room that he himself rented out. Jadwiga asked what the man was storing in the room, and his reply did not alleviate her fears. She felt that it was

[illegible]

[illegible]

best not to use the room as authorities seeking out stored goods might discover them. Instead, Jadwiga decided to keep to the original plan. They would reconnect with their former neighbor, the Aryan midwife who had helped nurse Roman back to health those many years ago when he was a year old and had laid in a coma for several days, and then she could help them settle in the nearby town of Skawina. Jadwiga continued to worry, though, about Halinka, and prayed that she and Roman were leaving a trail that Halinka could follow.

As it turned out, Jadwiga's fears of Halinka being able to find them were unnecessary. The lady *volksdeutsch* who was to deliver Halinka to Jadwiga was desperately in love with a Jewish man and therefore was quite sympathetic to the Jews, and got word, at her peril, to Jadwiga about what had happened on their journey. Halinka and the woman, along with many more people, were stopped and interrogated on their way to Warsaw, and the woman was unable to prevent the Gestapo from taking Halinka away. The woman did not know what Halinka had said to the Gestapo interrogators, but she felt that the girl might have broken down and revealed her true identity. This woman, Halinka's escort, was the last person to see Halinka alive as she waited in a long line of Jews who were being processed and would then be taken away to an unknown destination. The woman herself was not implicated, as she and Halinka had not been side by side on the trip, and Halinka obviously had not given her away. Once again, as was their habit, neither Jadwiga nor Roman reacted to the news about Halinka, beloved daughter and sister, nor did they ever discuss it.

Chapter 22

When they arrived in Skawina, she easily found her old friend, Zaurova, but barely recognized her as the woman now suffered from tuberculosis. In spite of her condition, the woman treated them wonderfully. After they had a meal, Jadwiga and the woman brought each other up to date on their lives in this year of 1942. Then Zaurova helped them to retire for the night by spreading pillows and quilts on the floor, and both Jadwiga and Roman were able to sleep peacefully for the first time in a long time. In the morning, their friend prepared a basin of fresh water so that they could wash and refresh themselves and then fed her guests a nourishing breakfast. The old friends talked of what Jadwiga should do next. There was no room in the small apartment for Jadwiga and Roman as Zaurova's niece lived with her. The woman advised Jadwiga not to apply to any of the other residences, as the occupants of the small town were very suspicious of any newcomers. She did know of a family who lived near Warsaw and who were in need of a housekeeper. She told Jadwiga to apply for the position as she and Roman would then have jobs and a safe refuge.

Once again, mother and son journeyed to a train station, fearful of discovery, but anxious to get to their new destination. It was somewhat incredible that they were headed back to Warsaw, since only a short time ago they had left there in a rush for their lives. They arrived in Warsaw, and, immediately upon disembarking from the train, were accosted in the street by a hoodlum who grabbed Roman by the collar and dragged him along the street accusing him of being a dirty Jew and loudly shouting threats along the way. Roman was mature beyond his thirteen years, and he in turn challenged the hood by threatening to go to the police station and report the guy for calling him a Jew. The hoodlum dared Roman to do it. Roman told Jadwiga to follow and he was very calm on the way to the station. Not so long ago, the chief of the police at the station had promised Roman protection if he ever got into trouble, and so Roman was confident in going there. The hoodlum did not expect this confident behavior and

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

became subdued and uneasy. Upon arrival, Roman went inside and soon returned with an inspector. The hoodlum ran away when Roman arrived with the inspector, and after thanking the inspector for his help, he and Jadwiga were on their way once again.

Zaurova had given Jadwiga the address of a chalet as well as a letter of recommendation to the owners. She wrote that she knew Roman and Jadwiga because she had nursed a family member to health many years ago and that the letter would help to establish long term identity and lend credibility to their claim that they were not Jewish. She also thought that the people in need of the housekeeper would treat Jadwiga and Roman well because of her recommendation. With letter in hand, Jadwiga and Roman approached the station once again, this time to travel to the farmhouse to apply for the position.

Roman and Jadwiga were excited, but also wary, as usual, to be at a train station, and then on a train. This train was overcrowded and there were no seats available. A woman standing next to Jadwiga watched Jadwiga carefully for quite some time, and then remarked with rudeness that only a Jewess would carry a handbag of such size. Jadwiga calmly responded with the fact that many people, "inherited things from the Jews after all," and that explanation seemed to satisfy the woman. Jadwiga, however, edged away from the woman, and blended back into the crowd. When she was certain the woman was not observing her, Jadwiga looked down at the bag and thought about it being a present from her husband's cousin, a butcher's daughter who had been locked up in a synagogue with many other people and left there to be burned alive. It was a dire circumstance, but Isidore's cousin knew of a secret exit in the back of the synagogue and so she and countless other Jews were able to escape with their lives long before it burned down. This cousin and her family soon went to London for safety, but sadly, soon after their arrival there, both the butcher and his wife died. These thoughts occupied Jadwiga for most of the journey to the farmhouse.

When she and Roman finally arrived at their destination, they discovered that it was going to be a very long walk through the forest to get to the chalet.

They had to ask directions occasionally, and this confirmation that they were strangers aroused the village people's fears and suspicions. Jadwiga prayed constantly and gave thanks that Roman looked so Aryan no one would believe that he was someone to be feared. The forest journey took forever and although this frightened Jadwiga, Roman was absolutely delighted. There were animals, wolves, in the forest and Roman could see their eyes glowing in the dark. He kept stopping to point out various plant life, and the different mushrooms that he and his friend used to pick. Jadwiga was flustered by his behavior, and continued to try to move ahead with speed, but every time she turned around and stopped, Roman was missing. Each time she called out he would appear with stories of hiding places and samples of life, and she would scold him for wandering. Jadwiga need not have worried, however. Roman had the woods in his blood and could have found her no matter how far ahead she had traveled. When they finally arrived at the chalet, a huge beautiful home with lots of dogs and horses, a servant led them through the kitchen and offered Jadwiga and Roman chairs while she left to inform the mistress of their presence. Soon, a pleasant plumpish woman entered the room and asked Jadwiga how she could help her. Jadwiga turned over Zaurova's letter of recommendation. The letter was addressed to the woman's daughter-in-law so the woman excused herself to deliver the letter upstairs to her daughter-in-law. A full half hour passed and then a woman in her thirties, emaciated and drawn, appeared and invited Jadwiga and Roman into the dining room.

Jadwiga told the woman that she was the wife of a Polish army officer killed in action. Like their mutual friend Zaurova, Jadwiga had been forced to move from Kalisz to Skavina. Since Jadwiga had no income, Zaurova had recommended this position. Jadwiga told the woman that she expected no salary, but only shelter for her son Roman and herself. The daughter-in-law apologized and said that the house was already too crowded and that they already had three refugee maids who were sharing the work of one. Jadwiga noticed the older woman standing in the doorway nodding with approval, but the

younger woman felt badly and discussed the possibility that Jadwiga and Roman could stay for a few days to recover from their journey. The older woman agreed with this offer, and Jadwiga and Roman were then directed upstairs to a large attic room occupied by two sisters-in-law and their children.

Mother and son removed their coats, quickly washed, and then returned to the dining area for dinner. There they saw that the table was covered with a sparkling white tablecloth. The occupants of the house assembled and included the mistress of the house, the master of the house, their son and daughter-in-law, their two children, a cousin, Mrs. Dabrovska, whose husband had been captured by the Germans, two other friends, three maids, and several farm boys. The master, a corpulent and jovial man, took his place at the head of the table, and invited Jadwiga and Roman to occupy two empty chairs at his left. Dinner consisted of a great many dishes, and Roman ate a tremendous amount, accepting seconds thirds and fourths of everything while Jadwiga was so worn out and depressed that she was unable to enjoy her meal. After dinner, Jadwiga was asked about her circumstances yet again. She explained as best she could, but still experienced the all too familiar tension when someone questioned about her life. At bedtime she and Roman returned to the attic where the hosts had provided a small narrow folding bed for the two of them to share. The other occupants of the room knelt by their beds to say their prayers, and Jadwiga and Roman also got down on their knees and muttered words under their breaths. They were careful to pray properly as they had heard that people thought Jews pretending to be Christians crossed themselves with their left hand. Thus, they passed their first test.

Roman settled into his new surroundings immediately. He was a few years older than the other children in the home, and so he became a sort of leader. He would organize expeditions and take them all on long walks and trips into the orchard. The other parents did not want the children roaming outdoors in such a free way and they asked Jadwiga to stop Roman. Jadwiga refused their

pleas, not wanting to deprive Roman from this small pleasure. Their situation was comfortable for a week.

When Sunday arrived, Dabrovska invited Jadwiga to go to church. Jadwiga accepted, but was very nervous. Roman, on the other hand, was delighted and acted as if he had attended church every Sunday of his life. Before the war Jadwiga had accompanied her housekeeper to church on some occasions and therefore knew what to expect. While in church, she simply imitated Dabrovska's every gesture. Jadwiga was not entirely confident in her imitation of Dabrovska, however, and in order to cover up for her inadequacy, Jadwiga kept her voice below a whisper. When she had to recite prayers, she did so quietly, and several times she stood when everyone knelt and knelt when everyone stood. Fortunately, Dabrovska seemed oblivious to Jadwiga's mistakes.

A week passed and Jadwiga once again had to accompany Dabrovska to church. This time her friend seemed less outgoing than usual. She would stare at Jadwiga intently and when Jadwiga would catch her, she would avert her eyes. By dinner that very night, Dabrovska had become downright hostile and after dinner, the mistress invited Jadwiga into her room. She told Jadwiga that since they were so crowded at the house, she thought it would be best if Jadwiga and Roman left.

The mistress suggested that they go to Zalesie Gorne, a resort town where there were many villas that remained empty during the winter. She felt that Jadwiga and Roman could easily find a place to stay in one of the villas. Jadwiga and Roman were devastated, and were left without a choice. After a fitful night's sleep, they washed, dressed and left that morning. The master and mistress and all the children were waiting at the door to say goodbye and the mistress even gave Jadwiga ten zloty. The children came away from the door and accompanied Jadwiga and Roman to the edge of the village. They were all very upset about Roman's leaving. The departure was very sad, and she and Roman plodded down the road, once again without prospects.

Jadwiga found herself thinking about other people who had it better than she did, and she felt jealous. But then she came to realize that the people she felt were in better shape living in the ghettos perhaps did not have it better, and maybe they were as afraid as she was. One friend, Dancygerova, whom Jadwiga had last seen in Warsaw, had been a target of Jadwiga's jealousy and anger. Dancygerova seemed to be having a gay old time flitting around the ghetto freely, and it angered Jadwiga immensely. Jadwiga later found out that the woman was actually being blackmailed, and was paying dearly for her freedom. Jadwiga didn't really want to continue on to Zalesie Gorne, but Roman kept pushing her, repeating over and over again that there would be peace and prosperity to be found there. Roman walked briskly along, dragging a pack much heavier than the one Jadwiga was carrying, as well as a suitcase. Jadwiga admired his stamina. With about six kilometers left to travel, they sat down in the forest to rest. Roman grew reserved and wondered aloud why they had been dismissed. He thought perhaps that it was because he had taken the children out of the house, and he said that he only did it to help so that the adults would have some quiet time. Jadwiga assured him that they were dismissed because it was discovered or thought that they were Jewish and the people of the household feared for their own lives.

Roman was angry, but Jadwiga tried to explain that the people did the best that they could under the circumstances and for that help they should be grateful. It was almost dark when they mustered up enough energy to continue their journey. They walked late into the night, guided by the distant light in what appeared to be a home. The occupants of the solitary farm were still awake and they made the decision to ask for shelter. They heard dogs barking wildly, and a stable boy appeared to open the gate. Jadwiga asked for shelter for the night and told the man that they would leave at dawn. The man led them to the stables and told them not to wake the horses. As they laid in the straw trying to keep warm, Jadwiga wondered how they would survive with no food and very little money left. When the sun rose, they set off again and arrived at a village.

Jadwiga hunted for a job as a housekeeper and after several days she found work with a young couple. The master of the house worked as a teacher but his wife did not work. It appeared that all she did was gossip with the neighbors all day. They couple had a small child, a dog, a piglet, and owned no furniture. They had only recently moved into the house and they slept on a makeshift wooden cot. The baby slept in a homemade cradle and the home consisted of two tiny rooms, a kitchen and a large closet full of junk in which the master installed a cot for Jadwiga and Roman.

Jadwiga cooked, cleaned the rooms, cared for the baby, who always had diarrhea, and did the laundry. The laundry was a monotonous task since Jadwiga constantly washed the baby's dirty diapers. Roman chopped wood, tended to the dog, cleaned the yard, and learned from a neighbor how to feed the piglet with a baby bottle. He also spent a lot of time in the woods praying to God. Roman did not have anyone else to talk with about all these dreadful things that were happening to him and around him. He didn't dare talk to his mother, as he knew she would just fall apart. He and Jadwiga went on as if nothing was amiss and never talked about their situation at all. Every time he would leave to go somewhere, Roman and his mother would shake hands as if they were strangers who would never see each other again, which was a possibility. Jadwiga spent her sleepless nights cradling the baby in her arms. The poor sickly, undernourished creature never stopped screaming. It constantly required changing and since there were very few diapers, Jadwiga washed the diapers day and night. The baby's parents were oblivious to their child's situation, and seldom around anyway. When they were there, they expected Jadwiga to cook dinner even though there was nothing to cook in the house. It was a ridiculous situation, but they would get angry and accuse Jadwiga of slovenliness. Then they would run out to buy a piece of meat and a chunk of lard. They hovered over Jadwiga as she prepared each meal. Jadwiga was disgusted with the lard being used as food, as she herself had never been forced to eat it, but then she had no need to worry as the masters would eat all the food themselves.

Jadwiga and Roman, meanwhile, lived on dry bread. The closet, which served as their bedroom, had no heat, and the winter was exceptionally cold. They were never able to feel warm and comfortable, but Jadwiga kept telling herself that at least they had a place to stay and that was preferable to wandering in the road. Once again, this situation was not to last.

One night, the couple received a visit from a neighbor and Jadwiga heard the neighbor tell the teacher to be careful as she and Roman were rumored to be Jewish. The master's wife marched into the kitchen, stared at Jadwiga for several minutes, and then left the room. Immediately, the teacher entered and told Jadwiga that she and Roman had to leave right then. Roman was beside himself, and disgusted that they had been turned out into the street like dogs. He was angry that he had tried to please the couple by raking manure, fetching endless buckets of water, chopping wood, and keeping the fire going in three stoves. It seemed like they were going to have to go to Zalesie Gorne after all.

Chapter 23

They set out on their journey but it was so dark in the woods that they had to stay under a tree for the night. It rained all night and Jadwiga did not feel that she could go on, and she didn't even care to. Again, her optimistic Roman encouraged her to keep going. Once they emerged from the woods in Zalesie Gorne, they asked someone along the way to direct them to one of the empty villas. This person directed them to a house that they said might still be available. The villa was a disaster. It was a one-story shack that was in total disrepair. They knocked on the door and an old woman with a distinctly Semitic face invited them in. There were pictures of the Lord Jesus and Mary plastered all over the walls of this little room. As Jadwiga looked around she saw that the place was quite dirty. Jadwiga told the woman that she and Roman were refugees from the Reich and that they had no place to stay. The woman herself turned out to be a tenant and told them that the owner lived in Piaseczno during the winter. She told Jadwiga to pay the owner a visit to see if they could acquire a room, but in the meantime, she invited them to stay with her until they could find a place. With that said, she served them some coffee and a few slices of bread. As they ate, a man burst into the room, and Jadwiga discovered that this Jewish looking man was her son. Jadwiga told her story, and both Mother and son agreed that their visitors must be helped.

Jadwiga thought that mother and son were in the same position as she and Roman, but as it turned out, they were neither refugees nor Jews. The woman's parents were of Jewish origin, but they had been brought up in a catholic orphanage and they had raised this woman, their daughter, in the Catholic Church. Jadwiga's hostess had lived in this area all her life. That evening, the woman laid straw on the floor for her guests and she lit the stove. It had been so long that they had slept near a fire that Jadwiga actually slept through the night.

The next morning they set out for Piaseczno to find the owner of the cottage. In order to find the house of the owner, they made inquiries and discovered that the landlady, like her tenants, was of Jewish origin but was married to a Catholic. When they finally located her, they asked her if they could take a room in her villa in Zalesie Gorne. The woman flat out refused. She said that the rooms were reserved for summer laborers. The woman offered no help or alternatives and so Jadwiga and Roman returned to the old woman feeling forlorn. The old woman graciously told them that they could share her home as long as they needed so that at least they wouldn't freeze and starve in the winter months. Jadwiga vowed then and there that if she survived the war she would not forget the old woman and her son.

When Jadwiga and Roman had left Krakow they had left most of their belongings there and so had very little to wear. Roman decided that he would return to Krakow to fetch some winter clothes. Jadwiga was horrified by his suggestion and forbade him to go. Roman begged Jadwiga to use logic. He said that they could not continue to live without warm clothes. Furthermore, he said he could not perform any type of outdoor labor if he could not keep warm. Jadwiga continued to beg Roman to reconsider, but he would not take no for an answer. Jadwiga's only hope was that he looked so much like an Aryan, it might save his life.

Days passed with no sign of Roman's return and Jadwiga went through hell with worry. Each day she watched the road from morning to night and when he finally appeared loaded down with packages, she ran to him hysterical with relief. Roman was exhausted and could barely take another step. The old woman saw this through her window and she herself ran out to help with the packages. Roman washed and ate and very briefly described the trip. He then collapsed on the straw bed and fell into a deep sleep. The following morning, Jadwiga noticed a neighbor, Mr. Zajczkowski, peeking in the window at them. Jadwiga described this at the breakfast table and the old woman said that it was the man next door, a widower with grown children living in Warsaw. When

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Jadwiga went out to dispose of garbage, the man suddenly appeared. He told Jadwiga that he saw her and the boy sleeping on the floor and that he would not allow such a travesty. He told Jadwiga to pack her bags and come to his house where there was plenty of room.

Jadwiga was wary but felt that it was time to leave the old woman's home. She agreed to inspect the man's house. Zajaczkowski showed her around the kitchen where he had installed two comfortable looking beds, and then he showed her the dining room. The home was plain, but it was clean and comfortable looking and Jadwiga thought that it would be quite suitable for her and Roman. She was about to tell Zajaczkowski this when an elderly lady, a French teacher who occupied a tiny room at the back of the house, came into the kitchen. Zajaczkowski introduced Jadwiga to the teacher, who seemed embarrassed by Jadwiga's presence. The woman turned her back on Jadwiga and quickly walked away. On the way out, Zajaczkowski explained that he could easily set up a cot for Jadwiga and Roman in the dining room, but that if she wished to sleep on the second cot in the kitchen, it would be much warmer. He told Jadwiga that he slept in the other cot, and Jadwiga felt that nothing was wrong with the arrangement as long as she had Roman with her.

Jadwiga decided to make the move immediately. The old woman seemed unusually distressed by Jadwiga and Roman's news, and she suggested that Jadwiga only move part of her things next door. "Try it, and if something goes wrong, you can come back." Jadwiga thanked her for everything and left the cottage taking only a small suitcase with her.

Later that day, while sitting on the porch with Jadwiga, Zajaczkowski told her his life's story. He told Jadwiga that he had two wonderful children, despised the war, had lost his wife many years ago, and would have remarried had he found someone to suit him; someone more like Jadwiga for instance. Jadwiga talked of herself as little as possible.

After dark, they came inside. Jadwiga called to Roman and they all retired for the night. Jadwiga couldn't believe her luck when she lay down. It had been

a long time since Jadwiga and Roman had enjoyed a real bed and the comfort of it was amazing. Roman fell asleep almost immediately, and Jadwiga wanted to although this was impossible as Zajaczkowaski was pacing back and forth next to his bed.

Early the next morning, Roman had to go outside. The second he left the kitchen, the landlord jumped out of his bed and locked the door. Considerably worried, Jadwiga observed the man's every gesture. He slowly approached her bed and clumsily attempted to embrace her. She sat up and hissed, "Open the door, or I'll scream so loud the entire village will come running." He stepped back, visibly frightened, but not yet ready to give up. He tried to reason with Jadwiga, tried to assure her that he meant her no harm, and that he was simply a lonely man. As he stood there in the middle of the room looking rather sheepish, Jadwiga jumped from her bed and unlocked the door herself.

When Roman returned, Jadwiga told him to pack his things, and that they were going to go back to the old woman's house. Roman was confused, but he sensed he should remain silent. He obediently stuffed the suitcase with their belongings, and they moved back to the old woman's cottage. When they arrived, Jadwiga told the old woman everything. To Jadwiga's surprise, the old woman was not a bit shocked by Jadwiga's story. Then Jadwiga was surprised even further when the old woman suggested that Jadwiga accept his advances, reminding Jadwiga that he would be able to provide for her and the boy very well. Jadwiga shuddered with disgust and stated that she would rather die than touch that man. The old woman did not repeat her suggestion. The old woman's son came into the home and seeing Jadwiga and Roman so dejected, he promised to do the impossible and find them a room. "However, this might cost you a lot of money," he warned Jadwiga. Jadwiga agreed to the man's terms and decided to wire friends for funds. If only he could find something soon, she thought.

By the end of the day, he told her that he had discovered a room with kitchen privileges in the town of Domanka, for 100 zloty. This room was located in a house that belonged to a Mr. and Mrs. Binkowski who were considered fine

people. Without a moment's hesitation, Jadwiga told the old woman's son that she and Roman would take the room the next morning. All that night, she wondered if that house was going to prove to be the haven that she and Roman had been searching for. Would they be able to settle at last? At dawn, the old woman's son helped them move their belongings to Domanka and all said cheerful good-byes.

Chapter 24

The room was large, clean, nicely furnished, and the Binkowski's made a favorable impression on Jadwiga. She kept herself from shedding happy tears as she felt that this was at last what she and Roman had been searching for. With the last of her money, Jadwiga paid for the room in advance, a gesture that pleased her landlords immensely. Her landlords and their two young boys were poor people, surviving on an allowance from their parents. The mistress of the home was a lovely young woman who Jadwiga liked immediately. Mrs. Binkowski showed Jadwiga the kitchen utensils to use and then put fresh sheets on the beds that Jadwiga and Roman would be occupying. She asked Jadwiga if there was anything else that she could do for them, and not to hesitate to ask if there was. Jadwiga smiled and declined her landlady's generous offer, saying that there was nothing more they required.

Jadwiga unpacked and placed their belongings neatly in a cupboard and two chests of drawers while Roman explored the house. Jadwiga could hear him asking incessant questions as he poked his nose into every nook and cranny of the house. She could also hear their landlady's laughter as she answered Roman's questions. Jadwiga was excited, and for a couple of hours, did not even think about being Jewish. In the evening, Jadwiga borrowed some provisions from her landlady and made everyone dinner. The very next day, optimistic about her future, Jadwiga told the landlady that she was looking for pupils. She felt that since all the schools were closed, teaching might be a good way to make money.

The landlady recommended the forester, a man named Brzezinski, who had three sons, as well as his brother who worked in a refinery in Warsaw and had several children, as potential pupils. Jadwiga's landlady told her that the foresters played an important role in the community, had aristocratic pretensions, and would surely respond favorably to the idea of private lessons.

Jadwiga's school was an instant success. The forester's wife enthusiastically agreed to entrust her children to Jadwiga's care, as did her in-

[illegible]

[illegible]

laws. Soon, other parents in the village followed the forester's lead. The children came to Jadwiga's school for a few hours each day, all at the same time. Jadwiga taught reading and writing, songs and poems and told stories. The students loved it and Jadwiga was able to make a schedule for herself. She was delighted to find herself busy every moment of the day, with no time to regret the past or worry about the future. With her landlords, the Binkowsi's, Jadwiga got on splendidly. They were delighted to have Jadwiga and Roman as tenants, and were doubly happy that they had people to watch over the children as well as the house as they had already been burglarized once.

The forester's in-laws, the Brzezinskis, soon became personal friends. Their youngest daughter was Jadwiga's namesake and a good friend to Roman. "Little Jadwiga", Jadja Ploginski, had three brothers, and her mother took care of their spotless home, the calves, horses, and a goat. Their father was home on Sunday, which was his only day off from the refinery. This worked in favor of Jadwiga, as the family did not attend church service on their father's only day off. The children were dressed inexpensively, but always neatly, and Jadwiga admired not only their demeanor, but their polite manors as well. The children had a genuine respect for elders, and Jadwiga thought on many occasions that other families should take a lesson from these children.

Jadwiga and Roman visited the family every Sunday. They always invited them to share their table on any holiday, and Jadwiga and Roman soon felt like family. During one of these visits, the conversation turned to a topic that Jadwiga generally avoided for fear of giving herself away. This topic was about the Jews. Jadwiga listened to her friends as they retold the story of the Otvock, which was a little town outside of Warsaw where the Jewish inhabitants were transported to a concentration camp or shot right there in the town. Rumors had circulated all over the Warsaw area, and people had witnessed atrocities that they said would haunt them forever. One of those stories was that of a woman who stood on the sidewalk holding her baby. A soldier came along, Jadwiga was told, and ripped the child from it's mother's arms, smashing it's head against the sidewalk. The

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

child was mercifully killed instantly. Another story that was related to Jadwiga was that of another baby's fate. That child was shot right out of his mother's arms. The first officer that had been issued the order to shoot the baby refused to carry out the order, but another stepped up to take his place. As the gun was raised, the child started laughing. The soldier who refused to shoot was dragged off, charged with insubordination, and shot to death himself. The man who ultimately did fire the bullet told his friends that the child's face haunted him everywhere. He could not forget the way the child had laughed in the face of death. Perhaps the child had thought the gun was a toy?

Otvock was not an isolated case, and Jadwiga's friends were aware of the atrocities committed everywhere. They were also aware of the German policy of systematic destruction and they did not approve of it. But, as it turned out their humane attitude towards the Jews did not shield Jadwiga and Roman from the brutish stupidity of their in-laws, the foresters, who seemed suspicious.

Jadwiga's teaching job was mentally rewarding but her fees were low since no one could afford anything higher, and she barely earned enough to keep her and her son alive. Because of this, Roman suggested that he make a trip to Warsaw to visit Mr. Sawicki, who had once promised to supply them with stockings to sell. The sale of stockings to remote villages could be lucrative, as people did not often purchase new items due to the distance to the stores. Roman convinced Jadwiga to let him make the trip to Warsaw as he was sure this venture could lead to prosperity. Jadwiga and Roman chose a day for his departure, and Roman had high hopes.

Before his departure, Roman and Jadwiga decided that their landlord, Mr. Binkowski should be included in their business venture. He could accompany Roman on the trip to Warsaw for the merchandise, and they would, in return, make him a full partner in the venture. Mr. Binkowski eagerly accepted the offer and he and Roman left for Warsaw. The trip was quite wonderful. Mr. Binkowski and Roman got along famously, and Roman knew no fear as he had a Christian man to vouch for him. Mr. Sawicki was delighted to see Roman and gave him

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

and his new partner plenty of merchandise. Mr. Sawicki arranged a percentage for Roman and his partner and on subsequent trips they would exchange profits and merchandise. Mr. Sawicki sent them off with well wishes and prayers for good luck.

Christmas came and in the village it was a custom for the priest to visit the homes of all his parishioners on Christmas Eve. Jadwiga thought that this was an unusual custom, as all her Catholic friends with whom she had enjoyed many holidays, had never had a priest visit them. Because of her inexperience with this custom, Jadwiga was terrified at the prospect.

As the time drew nearer to the priest's visit, Jadwiga dreaded Christmas Eve even more than usual. She was petrified that she would say or do a wrong thing and betray herself. Jadwiga paid excruciatingly close attention to everything the village housewives did and she tried her best to imitate them. She cleaned, scrubbed, and polished her room. She spread white sand before the door, and asked their landlady for a cross to put on the table. She explained to everyone that the Germans had confiscated one of her trunks and that trunk had contained her cross and Bible. The landlady offered Jadwiga the requested cross and asked if she needed anything else. Jadwiga said no, thanked her, and the woman stared back at her in disbelief. She then said to Jadwiga, "Don't you know you have to put a bowl of holy water on the table and slip at least 20 zloty under the priest's plate?" Jadwiga thanked her for reminding her of that forgotten custom and shut her door.

Neighbors asked Jadwiga to spend the day with them, and without a good excuse, Jadwiga accepted. When she arrived, she was greeted warmly and taken inside where several women were seated. Everyone smiled and greeted Jadwiga, who responded in kind. Jadwiga sat down at the table and made herself comfortable. On the way in she had noticed the words, "Majher, Kajzer, Baltazy," representing the Three Kings, written over the door. Her curiosity as to the meaning of the words overrode her common sense, and she asked her host what the words meant. Six heads simultaneously snapped in her direction, all

with the same incredulous expression. If Jadwiga could have taken her words back, she would have paid all the money she had left in the world to keep her security, but nothing could erase her irresponsible question. From that point on, people gossiped, and even though Roman would try to explain that having come from a big city they didn't practice superstitions, and even though Roman had that blond hair and blue eyes, nothing helped this new situation. The landlady told her mother about Jadwiga having to borrow the cross, and she said that she feared Jadwiga might be Jewish. One of the little boys overheard the discussion about Jadwiga and he told all his friends that his sister said her tenants were Jews. Soon, the whole village knew the Christmas story and Jadwiga no longer felt safe. The pupils still came to her classes, but whispered to one another during their lessons. They no longer listened to her, and ceased to treat her with respect. One day, Jadwiga caught one of the forester's boys stealing a notebook and hiding it under his coat in a store. She tried to reason with the boy by telling him that although no one saw him that time, he should think about what would happen if he got caught in the future. She did not mention the incident to his parents and Jadwiga heard that the boy continued to steal. Jadwiga struggled greatly with the decision to tell the boy's parents about his dangerous behavior, and came to the conclusion that it was in their best interest to know.

For her efforts, the boy received a beating and Jadwiga ended up losing three pupils. The forester and his wife had actually held Jadwiga responsible for his misdeed. They told her that since he had never done anything like this before, she was probably the one who had taught him. They also told Jadwiga that this incident of thievery confirmed that she was Jewish and that they would no longer let their children take lessons from her. Jadwiga was crushed and embarrassed.

Then one day out on the street, she passed the forester's sons and they called Jadwiga names. She ran home, terrified that others would hear. She couldn't believe that a short time ago, she was helping those children prepare toys and cut out paper silhouettes for their Christmas tree. Now these same

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

children would not hesitate to denounce her. And the people she had shared Christmas day with, who had praised her hospitality, would not come to her defense. She compared the forester's children to her son Roman who had respect and understanding for others. A teacher had once described Roman as having such courage, such kindness, and such maturity. She had told Jadwiga of an incident where Roman fought to keep a fellow student in school. The other boy was accused of stealing notebooks and the teacher asked to have the boy expelled. Roman heard what was happening and went to the teacher on behalf of the boy. He told her that the boy came from a poor family, that his father was blind, and that every afternoon, the boy had to take his father for a walk instead of playing like everyone else. He bravely informed her that if she threw the desperate boy out of school, Roman would also leave. Roman's frankness and command of character impressed the teacher, and she informed the class that the notebooks were probably just lost. She asked if everyone could look for them before they left for the day. The notebooks had conveniently been placed where they would be easily discovered, and the poor boy who had taken them avoided scandal. He was very happy to be able to stay in school, and felt he owed a debt to Roman that he could never fully repay.

Jadwiga's thoughts of Roman were interrupted when her landlady paid her a visit. The landlady told her that the people in the village were whispering that she might be Jewish. Jadwiga was terrified, but somehow maintained the appearance of calmness. She accused the landlady of spreading those disgusting rumors, and she warned her that she had better stop since Jadwiga's husband was a high-ranking officer in the Polish army. She threatened the landlady that once he found out what she was doing to his family, he would not forgive and forget. Jadwiga then said that she was moving out since she refused to be under the same roof with the likes of someone like her.

Jadwiga's haughty indignation obviously impressed the woman and the following day the landlord came to Jadwiga and told her that they didn't want her to move. He asked Jadwiga to please take a trip to Grujec and have their papers

verified at the police station there. Once that was done, he promised to stop the scandalous rumors from being spread, and assured Jadwiga that she would have a safe haven with them again. He also suggested to Jadwiga that if she didn't want to be bothered taking the trip, that Roman should take his pants off in front of a few witnesses and then everybody would be convinced. Jadwiga ordered the landlord to get out of her room and leave her alone. With that, she knew she had to act quickly and get as far away from the Binkowski's as possible, as delay would spell death in this year of 1943.

Chapter 24

The task of looking for new shelter was near impossible since the Germans had announced that they would kill entire families and destroy the villages of people convicted of harboring Jews. Everyone was afraid to open their doors to strangers and Jadwiga spent days searching aimlessly with no success and living with the unbearable tension in the Binkowski household. Jadwiga had taken to selling children's socks, and one day she wandered up to the gate of a large estate owned by people named Wisoscki. The coachman who greeted her at the gate bought several pairs of children's socks and the two conversed amicably. Jadwiga told him that she came from the Poznan district and he was delighted to hear that since his wife was a native of the Poznan district. He said his wife would want to meet Jadwiga and asked her to come inside right away. When he heard of her difficulties in finding a job and lodgings, he offered to introduce Jadwiga to the Wisoscki's who were very influential people due to their wealth and elegance. He thought that perhaps they would be able to help.

The coachman was as good as his word and he introduced Jadwiga and Roman to the Wisosckis, who were very interested in her story. Jadwiga explained her problem with lodging but the Wisosckis gave her no practical suggestions or solutions. The coachman, feeling badly about his employer's oversight, told Jadwiga that if they found nothing better, she and her son could share his little wooden forest cottage that he took care of for a Warsaw family. The family owned the cottage and used it in the summer. He gave Jadwiga the address and directions and said he hoped they would meet again. When she got back to the Binkowskis that day, she and Roman packed up their belongings, but then faced the problem of transporting everything to the coachman's cottage. On the very day of their problem, however, Mrs. Binkowski's mother came for a visit. She was a nice old woman and hated to see anyone suffer. She had traveled the distance in a cart and offered its services. She promised to take them wherever they wanted to go and not tell anyone, including her own daughter, their new

address. Jadwiga could see no solution except to trust the old woman and so they loaded everything into her cart, leaving space only for the old woman to drive the cart. Jadwiga and Roman did not ride in the cart, but rather walked on foot to the Gruyecki forest. The walk was not difficult but it was long. When Roman and Jadwiga reached the coachman's forest hut, the coachman's wife, her two children and Mrs. Binkowski's mother were waiting for them. The old woman had arrived with her cart long before Roman and Jadwiga, and after helping them to unload the cart she left immediately due to the late hour. She asked in prayer that the Lord Jesus would protect all of them and she asked the coachman's wife to please watch over Jadwiga and her son. The old woman was so kind, that Jadwiga parted from her with tears.

The cottage consisted of one room and a kitchen with two beds. The coachman's wife told Jadwiga that Jadwiga and Roman would have to share one bed, while she and her husband would share another. The children, she told Jadwiga, could share a cradle. The cottage was tiny, but everything was spotlessly clean including the linen, and Jadwiga felt very fortunate. Roman immediately befriended everybody, as usual, and Jadwiga helped her hostess prepare dinner. The arrangement was cramped but comfortable, and as the days passed, Roman busied himself with chopping wood, gathering loose twigs to add to the fire and fetched water from the well. He also kept the children amused with makeshift toys, adventure stories and long exploratory walks. Life seemed good for the moment, and it was friendly and relaxed in this little town named Piaseczno. Roman would even take the train to Placethno and then on to Warsaw where there was a flea market.

Unfortunately, two weeks later, the coachman informed them that the owners would be coming soon and that Jadwiga would have to look for another room. Jadwiga pleaded with the man to let them stay. The main room was to be painted so Jadwiga asked that they would allow them to sleep on the kitchen floor. The coachman said it was impossible, as his own family would have to sleep on the kitchen floor. There simply wouldn't be enough room for all of them.

Jadwiga was suspicious that the coachman was making everything up and indeed, she was right. She found out that the Binkowskis had told the coachman that she and Roman were probably Jews and he should be careful. For the coachman, that was the end of it. The coachman was not evil, he just didn't care for Jews. Although he and his wife didn't actually believe that Jadwiga was Jewish, he had to be very careful of his position and couldn't have her living with them. Strangely enough, he invited Jadwiga to come and visit them whenever she could.

Jadwiga was so totally defeated at this point that she truly didn't believe she could go on anymore. Their troubles were never ending and she felt herself sinking deeper and deeper into hopelessness and depression. Having Roman was the one thing that kept her from giving up completely. Then, at the deepest point of her despair, she heard about an empty villa hidden deep in the forest that belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Vogel. Mr. and Mrs. Vogel were Polish and good Catholics, and Mrs. Vogel was a teacher. Mr. Vogel was of German extraction and their son-in-law was the editor of a Warsaw daily. Young Mr. Vogel had garnered much respect throughout his years, and had strong ties with the German high command. The Vogels had five empty rooms at their villa, and in spite of their German associations, Jadwiga decided to approach them about living there. When Jadwiga requested a room, the Vogels acted somewhat disgusted. They asked for Jadwiga's *kenkarte*, but even though she presented that to them, they were not reassured. Mr. Vogel told Jadwiga that he didn't rent rooms to foreigners, especially in these uncertain times. Jadwiga began to cry and feeling more depressed than ever turned to leave. The Vogels must have felt terrible for what they had said to her because they called her back and asked her forgiveness. They apologized for their behavior and asked her to please understand that since she had no birth certificate, and since they did not know her personally, that they couldn't possibly take on such a responsibility. They asked Jadwiga if she knew about the latest German decree, that people could lose everything, including their lives, if they took in a stranger. Jadwiga knew

[illegible]

[illegible]

then that finding lodgings would be more difficult and costly than in the past. Jadwiga began to cry again, and Mr. Vogel asked her to stop as he had an idea. He said that there was a small campground nearby that was owned by people who lived in Warsaw and who almost never visited their property. Before the war, the owners had laid a foundation for a summer home but had barely finished the outhouse when the war broke out. The Vogels told Jadwiga that she should use the abandoned site until the cold weather came, or at least until she found something better. They promised to deliver Jadwiga fruits and vegetables from the garden, and told her that she could come and go from their own home often, but with discretion, as they did not want the neighbors to know anything.

Jadwiga did not understand why the Vogels chose to help her, nor did she stop to question it. It could only be assumed that the Vogels focused all their guilty feelings of not helping others on helping Jadwiga and Roman. Jadwiga and Roman went to inspect the abandoned campground, and found the tiny wooden tool shed that was barely an outhouse. The place was, however, large enough for the two of them, and at this point in their struggle, they thought it resembled a castle.

Mother and son moved in at once. They promised the coachman that they would gather their belongings very shortly. The coachman was visibly relieved that Jadwiga and Roman were leaving. He gave them some straw and they were able to cover it with linens to form beds. Jadwiga and Roman also found a small bench and brought that to the hut to use as a table. Roman salvaged a piece of pipe, passed it through the miniature window, put a few bricks against the wall and covered it with a piece of scrap sheet metal, providing them with a makeshift stove. He also carved a display shelf for dishes from a piece of wood, and constructed a crude wooden lock for the door. The young man was ingenious and gathered thin slices of bark off trees and pine needles to make a kind of insulted coat around the hut. Once the bark and pine needles had been tucked into all the crevices, the hut was warm and silent. Roman also cut several small dead trees down to keep the stove running 24 hours a day. He cut

enough trees down to last the entire winter. It never occurred to Jadwiga and Roman how dangerous it was for them to be out in the woods alone and the only problem Jadwiga had with the little space was trying to sleep on the hard floor.

Several trips were made to retrieve their belongings from the coachman's cottage, and once they had been unpacked and comfortably arranged, they decided to earnestly look for a real bed. On their way back to the campground from a trip to the coachman's cottage, they came across an old monastery. Roman knocked on the door and after a long wait, a surprised prioress opened the door. Jadwiga asked if they could borrow a bed, explaining to the prioress that she and her son were unable to find a room and were living at a campground. The prioress was gentle in her questions, and asked them where they had been living before moving to the campground. Jadwiga told the woman they were refugees from the Poznan district. The prioress was sympathetic and unsuspicious, and told them she would provide them with a wooden cot the following day.

The prioress was as good as her word. When they gratefully arrived to collect the cot, Jadwiga and Roman were invited to visit the monastery every Sunday and on holidays. Jadwiga felt obligated to accept the prioress's invitation and committed to visiting on Sundays when they were able to get away from obligations.

The prioress blessed Jadwiga and Roman and said that it would bring her great pleasure to visit with them on Sundays. She then helped them to take the cot outside, lifting it over the door threshold, whereupon she wished Jadwiga and Roman good fortune before returning to the warmth of the convent.

With three people to lift it, the cot had been heavy, but bearable. Without the prioress's assistance, however, the cot was barely manageable. Slick leaves on the forest floor made secure footing a rarity and more than once, Jadwiga and Roman slipped, dropping the cot to the ground. The effort was taxing and Jadwiga's palms became sweaty, making her grip on the cot even more unsteady. Roman was driving the cot's transport at a fevered pace, and Jadwiga

did not have the strength to keep up. Finally, they devised a way to simultaneously push and pull the cot using the slick of the leaves to their advantage.

Moving the cot inside the hut exhausted what strength Jadwiga had remaining and she asked Roman to drag the cot into place by himself. Then they both flopped down on this piece of furniture to enjoy its comfort. To their disappointment, the bed was as hard as the floor.

Jadwiga placed a picture of the Holy Mother of Christ on the wall over the cot and thought of Mrs. Binkowski's mother, who gave Jadwiga the picture when they parted. Jadwiga made sure that the picture was straight, and that it would be clearly visible to anyone standing in the doorway. Now that they were settled, Jadwiga turned her thoughts to finding a job. Roman was still travelling to Warsaw to collect socks but Jadwiga remained uncomfortable with the safety of the situation. She waited with fear until Roman returned, always feeling she was on the verge of having a nervous breakdown. No employment solutions presented themselves to Jadwiga, and there was no alternative but to have Roman continue to make the dangerous trip. They simply needed money any way they could get it.

Jadwiga spent much of her time sitting deep in thought. One day Jadwiga was sitting on a stone in front of the hut when her mind wandered back to an incident from when she worked in the ghetto in her native city. She and two of her friends, an old religious Jew named Frenkel and his daughter, spent entire nights weighing out twenty grams of produce consisting of cereal, sugar, a pinch of tea and a few grains of rice to mail to other ghetto inmates. They packed the produce into envelopes, inventing names and addresses for the recipients. The Germans allowed only one envelope per family. Jadwiga's housekeeper, Gosposia, played a major role in the operation. She would take the materials from one ghetto, and with the aid of her friends would have it transported to other ghettos in Warsaw and Lodz. Gosposia did all of this with total disregard for her safety. Their only reward besides the elimination of the hunger of starving people

were the letters they received daily in the Kalisz ghetto known as the "Arbiets Lager," from the inhabitants of the other ghettos. These letters were filled with horror and pain and desperate cries for help. Parents wrote about their children who were swollen from hunger and who were dying in their arms. Jadwiga and her friends drove themselves constantly. They no longer cared about their own lives, but only about helping the others however and whenever they were able.

Although Jadwiga knew the importance of eating well for her own health, she shared every bite she could spare with the others, denying herself as much as possible in order to send the packages. The mailings continued for only a short period of time. Weeks after they had started, the Germans put an end to all correspondence except for officially printed postcards. There was no longer any way to get food to the ghetto inmates without smuggling it in physically, and with broken hearts, they were forced to abandon their generous assistance.

These postcard letters were kept short and when one gathered enough together from several sources, one discovered that they all contained only good news. While living in Sandomierz she herself had received one of these postcards from her husband. He wrote that he was in the Lodz ghetto, otherwise known as the "Litzman Statt," and that he was well. Thinking back, Jadwiga realized that this was the last she had heard from him, her last contact with his life. She didn't tell Roman, but she constantly thought about Isidore and whether he was alive and if so, how he must be so worried about them. She wondered if she would ever see him again.

She reemerged into the present and continued to worry about ways of earning enough money to buy bread. With Roman's agreement, she decided that they both should gather mushrooms in the woods and she would then go door to door to sell them. Before undertaking their new employment project, they set about putting the finishing touches on the cabin. The roof leaked every time the weather turned sour, and their first task was to patch the roof with some tar that the resourceful Roman had found. They also returned to the monastery to borrow a wheelbarrow so that they could gather and transport more pine needles

to further weatherproof their hut. Winter was fast approaching and Jadwiga and Roman were determined to complete the weatherproofing of the shack. The nuns were wonderful to Jadwiga and Roman. They were very emancipated, unlike the Polish nuns who just prayed and kept to themselves. The mother superior was a beautiful and friendly young woman and very easy to be around. Roman would chop wood for them and converse in Polish with them and they in turn would give him bread and fruit to take home. They even asked Roman to come to share prayers with them and Mass since he was pure and young and had no sins. It was a wonderful time and the nuns never asked Roman about his background. They simply accepted him for what he was.

In order to obtain the required amount of pine needles to finish the weatherproofing, Roman chopped down a tree that was laden with needles. Using a borrowed axe and tools, he then proceeded to finish the work on the shack. Jadwiga had still not become accustomed to Roman's skill, done through his own intuition, and as she watched him work, she thought to herself that she wouldn't have believed it if she hadn't seen it herself. During the whole process they took great pains not to be seen or heard, and all the evidence, including the freshly chopped tree were covered with dirt in order not to draw attention to the fact that they were in the area.

Once the weatherproofing was done, they began to collect mushrooms in earnest, and while Roman worked in the deep woods, Jadwiga performed whatever odd jobs she could find at the various estates in town. She would mend stockings and lingerie from the estates, repairing every tear with tiny almost invisible stitches that were praised by all for their finery. When this work became thin, she picked and sold potatoes as well. Many of Jadwiga's customers requested her services repeatedly. Whenever she entered the house of one of these regular customers, a woman who lived with her two daughters, she had the strange feeling that she knew them from somewhere. It frightened her to visit the home, but she could not afford to turn business down, no matter what the risk. Besides, Jadwiga had been in more tenuous situations than this before, and

neither the woman nor her two daughters ever showed any sign of recognizing her.

As Jadwiga went about her various jobs, Roman found another job with a gardener by the name of Latkowski. When the gardener ran out of vegetables from his own garden, he would send Roman on foot to buy produce in a village twenty kilometers away. Although Jadwiga constantly worried that Roman was under nourished, as their diet consisted mostly of baked mushrooms, she did not worry about the rigors of the boy's job. One day, she met him returning from one of those trips with a huge sack of vegetables on his back. The sack was so heavy that Roman was bent over double under the weight. Jadwiga was stunned at the hard labor her young son was performing, and Roman was embarrassed. He had never told Jadwiga exactly what the nature of his work was since he didn't want to worry her. Jadwiga was overwhelmed to now know what the boy was doing and she persuaded Roman to give up the gardening job and return to picking mushrooms. They also discussed that Jadwiga was trying to find better work with the help of a seamstress, and hoped that sewing might bring in more money.

While seeking employment as a seamstress, Jadwiga met a nurse by the name of Teczynowa. The nurse lived in a hotel under an assumed name and there were always rumors surrounding her that she was Jewish. She was constantly being blackmailed and when she ran low on money she was forced to move. Since her move, she was working for a local family as a nurse, and when that family's cook became ill, she proposed Jadwiga as a temporary cook. Jadwiga was ecstatic with the handsome salary that was offered and she accepted the job immediately.

Chapter 25

From the very first day on the job, Jadwiga carried a large handbag that she used to carry her daily lunch ration home to Roman. The bag was very conspicuous and made Teczynowa very suspicious that Jadwiga might be stealing from the cupboard. Teczynowa feared that should anything ever go missing from the cupboard, she would be the one to be accused. So, she searched the bag whenever Jadwiga turned away, but of course nothing from the pantry was ever found in it. Jadwiga had been so happy about the job at first but now Teczynowa's suspicions were causing Jadwiga great depression. Teczynowa had taken to following Jadwiga around the house at a distance, and making comments that she knew Jadwiga was up to no good and that she was out to catch her. Jadwiga would burst into tears constantly.

After one of Teczynowa's brutal attacks, Jadwiga picked up a knife to cut some vegetables. Apparently the master of the house had decided to sharpen a kitchen knife and perhaps because Jadwiga had been feeling so down, she may have been careless. She cut herself deeply, so deeply that she couldn't stop the bleeding. Teczynowa may have been a nurse, but Jadwiga was unable to bring herself to ask the woman for help. Jadwiga decided that this atmosphere of suspicion was too much for her, and with despair, she quit the job. She also felt that Teczynowa was not acting completely on her own, and Jadwiga figured that the master had told her to search Jadwiga's bag. Jadwiga decided not to relate any of this to Roman, as he was so charged up all the time, she feared that he might do something rash. When he asked, she told him that the old cook was well once again.

Jadwiga had not lined up another position before leaving, and so she had nothing to do. She cleaned the hut, did the laundry, and swept out the grounds to keep busy. Autumn arrived with a windy roar, and Jadwiga became concerned about spending a winter in the hut, especially now that she was out of work. To add to her discomfort, the Polish resistance movement had become quite active

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

in the area and the Germans frequently combed the woods where Jadwiga and Roman were living searching for Partisans and Parachutists. One day, Jadwiga went out of the hut to throw away some dirty water and came face to face with a group of German soldiers and Polish policemen dressed in navy blue uniforms. The policemen were under German orders to hunt for Partisans, and although Jadwiga was frightened, she smiled warmly at the group. She immediately thanked God for the fact that Roman was not there, but rather away visiting a railroad man and his family who had become their friends. A soldier asked her in German “Was machst du hier?” Jadwiga translated the words in her head as, “What are you doing here?” but she pretended that she did not understand German and asked one of the policemen to translate. She explained that she was a refugee from the Posnan district, living here in the woods. This was a legitimate answer since the district had been assigned to the Reich, and many Poles had been forcibly resettled. Jadwiga told them that she had to live in the forest because the room the district council assigned her was too damp and she couldn’t afford to rent a room on her own. She told them that she was sick and unable to tolerate dampness. The soldier next asked, “Und Wo Hast Wo Deinem Mann?” Once again she asked the Polish policeman to translate the question of, “Where is your husband?” She told them that her husband had died in combat in 1939. The German then asked, "Wo ist deine *kenkarte*?” When Jadwiga turned to go inside to get her *kenkarte*, a soldier followed her to make sure that no one was hiding in the hut. He read her *kenkarte*, searched the hut for weapons, and then went out and whispered something to the others. The group of soldiers left quickly without disturbing Jadwiga any further. She didn’t know whether to be relieved or frightened with their hasty retreat, but she worried so hard, that she was soon too worn out to worry any longer. Besides, it was such a long way to town that Jadwiga reasoned the Germans were probably afraid of the forest when it got late. She flopped down on the bed and waited for Roman. When Roman returned that night, Jadwiga told him what had happened, and how she was afraid that the group might return and find him. They discussed the situation in

[illegible]

depth and decided that they should regularly attend services at the monastery chapel in case they needed a reference verifying their Aryan status. They also did not want their strange lifestyle to attract any unwanted attention that would start rumors.

Fortunately, their friendship with the established Christian railroad man and his family helped to allay suspicion among the villagers. At Easter time, the railroad man sent his children to the hut with gifts of food for Jadwiga and Roman. Jadwiga took the food to the priest and asked him to bless it, a gesture that made a very good impression and as time passed, Mr. and Mrs. Vogel became less shy and more comfortable with Jadwiga and Roman's presence. Sometimes when they would visit Jadwiga, they would bring tomatoes and carrots from their garden. Mrs. Vogel often visited alone and always made excuses for not inviting Jadwiga to spend the winter at her villa. She told Jadwiga that she would gladly have them at her villa if her daughter and son-in-law were did not have to live there. It secretly annoyed Jadwiga that Mrs. Vogel constantly referred to her son-in-law as an important newspaper editor, as though he was the only educated man left in the world.

Roman too had become friendly with some people who would come to the area from Warsaw. Roman's friends were named Jurek and Tadek. Jurek was Roman's age and Tadek was a bit older. Roman knew the woods well, and would take the new friends deep into the woods on adventures to show them around. Tadek looked a little Jewish with his dark hair, but he was not, and Jurek was a little slow going in the mind. Nevertheless, Roman liked them very much. After several visits to Jadwiga and Roman's forest hut, Tadek and Jurek invited Roman to visit them in Warsaw where they lived on Tlomacka, half a block from the entrance to the ghetto. Roman told Jurek his papers had been stolen on a train, and that he would be afraid to visit them in Warsaw in case he was questioned. Jurek told Roman that his father was a contractor and maybe he could get Roman an arbeitz ausweiss, a work permit. The work permit would enable Roman to come and go about the ghetto freely, and allow him to work

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

gathering old bricks from destroyed buildings for use in future construction efforts. Roman decided he would do it so that he could get the coveted work permit.

What seemed like an ideal situation for replacing his lost papers turned out to be a frightening experience. The Gestapo searched everyone going into and coming out of the ghetto. They were looking for smuggled weapons, goods, anything. A group of Poles would always lurk around the site, and all a Pole had to do was look at one of the German soldiers sideways, then look at one of the workers, and the Gestapo would torture the suspect unmercifully just because a Pole signaled suspicion. The Germans would cut the Jewish workers' fingers off, hang them up and beat their feet, break their bones, whatever they could think of to find out information. Roman witnessed this abuse daily and constantly feared that he would be caught and tortured, and would be forced to tell where his mother was. He vowed to himself that if he was discovered, he would never tell.

The work was hard and tedious and Roman hated it. Once the work crew was inside the ghetto, they would take bricks from a building, rub off the mortar and then stack the bricks in piles. Roman would complete his work as efficiently and cleanly as possible so as not to bring attention to himself. He never got over being scared during the Gestapo searches. Those intimidating men were always there with the dogs, always looking for hiding Jews. But, he joked right along with everyone else about the dead bodies lying all over because he needed the workers to believe he was one of them and he needed that work permit. He was the youngest one there, at fourteen, but he looked eighteen, and he worked like a man. He acted just as crude as all the other workers, so as not to arouse suspicion, and he never let anyone know that he came from a good family.

The buildings and surrounding area smelled putrid from all the dead bodies buried under the rubble and each day it became more difficult for Roman to enter the area and do the required work. His shoes would get torn from the roughness of the stone and each night when he returned home Jadwiga would do her best to make repairs so that Roman could be more comfortable the following day. Her fingers were worn from the delicate stitching she performed every day

and every night, and the skin began to peel and bleed around her nails from the dryness. Mother and son never talked about what it was that Roman was doing and as frightened as he was throughout the time he worked at the ghetto, Roman played a brave game in front of his mother and took special care to act brave in front of Jurek and Tadek. It was difficult to tell who was more relieved when two weeks passed and Roman received the work permit. Once he had the permit in his hands, he never went back to do the ghetto work again.

Roman never knew, or asked, what Jurek did during the day, but now that Roman had quit working in the ghetto, Jurek invited him to town one day. After wandering around Warsaw a bit, they decided to take a streetcar ride. No sooner had they boarded the vehicle, than people started screaming, “lapanka, lapanka.” Jurek shouted to Roman to jump off the streetcar. Roman jumped and landed directly on his knees. No matter what he did, he couldn’t get up. Jurek was already running away and when he saw what happened, he ran back to help Roman. Roman couldn’t believe his friend returned to help him since the Germans were shooting and throwing hand grenades at the people who had jumped off the car. Jurek picked Roman up and threw him over his shoulder, running as fast as he could away from the scene. Roman’s legs were injured so badly that he was unable to walk and actually had to stay in bed for a few days at the boy’s home. Jurek laughed with Roman, who felt confident that should he ever have to leap from a moving streetcar again, he would do it differently. Staying in bed was almost impossible for Roman, who wanted nothing more than to be outside with his friends. Jurek and Tadek visited him often, and when he was healed, the three continued on as if nothing had ever happened.

Jurek and Tadek lived in huge rooms in the same apartment building in Warsaw. Roman thought from the Hebrew inscriptions on the walls that it was once a Jewish hospital. Roman was reading the words one day when Jurek asked him what he was doing. Roman said that he was just looking at the strange symbols. He said he found those funny things on the walls interesting.

Jurek didn't say another word and Roman acted completely disinterested after that.

Roman learned that Jurek and Tadek were cousins and had been good friends even before the war. The three boys together were as close as brothers and visited in one huge room where they had great fun building forts and playing games. The families treated Roman like one of their own and Roman felt safe enough to stay over there. Usually though, he would only stay for one or two days at a time, as he always liked to get back to his mother so she wouldn't worry. Roman had actually been bed-bound with his injured legs at Jurek's and Jadwiga nearly died with worry about where he was. After that incident, Jadwiga demanded that Roman get word to her if anything like that ever happened again.

Selling mushrooms and sewing had given Jadwiga the opportunity to speak with many people, and when Roman was not off doing odd jobs or visiting Jurek and Tadek, he helped her. One of these customers, an ex-police inspector from Warsaw, owned a winter and summer home in the village of Zalesie Gorne. When Jadwiga offered the inspector mushrooms, he invited her into his yard so that he could inspect them. Once she was in the yard he took her over to a large table where there were beautiful mushrooms all arranged in rows. He criticized Jadwiga for keeping her mushrooms tightly bound in her kerchief, as the delicate vegetables would get squashed. She apologized and explained that she had no other implements to use except her kerchief. She told him that she could not even afford to buy a basket because she barely earned enough money to buy bread for her and her son. She explained that Roman picked the mushrooms and she sold them. The inspector, Mr. Dabrowski, looked her over very carefully then and asked why she took up the mushroom trade since she didn't look at all like a farmer.

Once again, Jadwiga used her refugee story. When she told the inspector that Roman was fourteen, he offered to take Roman off Jadwiga's hands and treat him like his own son until the boy was grown. A year ago Jadwiga would have been outraged by the inspector's offer. But today, with Roman finding his

manhood and becoming unmanageable, the offer warranted her consideration. When she got back to the hut she told Roman about the inspector's offer. She was enthusiastic about it, especially because recently Roman was constantly sneaking out and coming back with stories about partisans and weapons. Although she didn't tell Roman, she was secretly worried that he might run away. Jadwiga felt this new offer might be a good way to keep Roman in check, as he would have the guidance of a father figure. She persuaded him to accept the inspector's offer on a trial basis if for nothing else than for the shelter that would be provided at the villa for the winter. Roman thought about his mother's suggestion. They had been in their little place a year now and things were going pretty well for him. He wasn't sure he was ready to make a change. So, somewhat reluctantly, Roman went to see the inspector the next morning, and by that evening, everything had been arranged. Upon meeting him, Mr. and Mrs. Dabrowski were very satisfied with Roman and wanted him to stay on. For about a week, Roman walked back and forth to work every day, returning to the hut every night. Roman told the inspector that while he liked the work he performed, he would be unable to stay unless the inspector also made provisions for Jadwiga. He told the inspector they were living in a hut in the forest and feared the coming winter. Roman reasoned that he could work harder if he didn't have to walk back and forth to work every day. The next day Jadwiga was asked to meet with the Dabrowskis. Jadwiga immediately disliked Mrs. Dabrowski but already knew the inspector was a kind man.

Mr. Dabrowski was polite, thoughtful, tall and attractive, with a fierce looking mustache and Jadwiga was impressed enough with him that she felt able to overlook the feelings she had for his wife. Jadwiga took a housekeeper's position in exchange for room and board in the summer villa and it was agreed that Jadwiga would work daily until four o'clock in the afternoon. That would allow her to be free in the evenings to help the seamstress so that she could earn some extra money. With the position settled, Jadwiga helped the Dabrowski's

move from their summer villa to their winter house that very moment. She then moved all Roman's and her own belongings from the hut into the villa.

This new residence consisted of one large room divided into two rooms by a cupboard. There was a stove behind the cupboard, and while it was adequate for cooking, it provided little heat in the winter. Jadwiga was afraid to put in a heating oven as the building appeared flammable and she feared it would start a fire. The villa also had a small porch and an outhouse in the orchard about a quarter of a mile away. The accommodation was little better than their hut, but Jadwiga felt significantly more secure in these new surroundings and Roman would have the guiding hand of a strong man. Besides, the opportunity came just in time as Jadwiga and Roman were going to be evicted from the campground. Rumors about the two residents in the forest had reached the owners of the campground and the owners had decided to sell their land to avoid unpleasantness. Still, Jadwiga actually found herself leaving the hut with a pang of regret. She had learned how to do quite a few things there that she had never had to do before. For example, she had learned how to sew without a table, and used a low bench as a substitute table. She thought too about when Roman was ill. He had been in terrible pain and was holding his stomach and screaming, and she thought it might be mushroom poisoning. She decided to go the monastery and ask for help and the prioress liked Roman and decided to take a look at the boy since she had some knowledge of medicine. Jadwiga trusted her and knew that if she discovered the truth while examining Roman she would not betray them to the Germans. Roman was terrified and while the prioress examined him, he squirmed around all over the place to keep the lower part of his body concealed. The prioress did not seem to find this at all strange and when she had concluded her examination, she recommended a strict diet and left some pills which Roman was to take twice a day. When the prioress left she even blessed their little hut. After a few days, Roman felt better and went and thanked the prioress promising to bring firewood to the monastery whenever he could. Memories of that time in the hut and how Jadwiga had learned to cope with

circumstances that hadn't ever been part of her life kept cropping up for Jadwiga. A year had sped by, but Jadwiga knew it was time to move on to the next stage in their life.

Chapter 26

The Dabrowski's summer villa turned out to be even colder than Jadwiga had anticipated and both she and Roman were so numb from the cold that neither was able to sleep on that first night. From then on they had to sleep with scarves wrapped around their feet. Their living conditions had not improved to any great degree and although they were in danger living in the forest, Jadwiga began to feel that they were in even more danger now living among strange people. These new strangers could become very suspicious of Jadwiga and Roman's actions and turn them over to the Germans without giving it a second thought. She tried to keep busy so she wouldn't have to think about it.

Jadwiga's work responsibilities included cleaning the Dabrowski's winter house, tending the orchard, and keeping the summer villa in good repair. Her mornings began at six o'clock and each day was the same. She would go to the wood shed and chop wood for the entire day and then lug it to the house. Sometimes Roman would take over that chore when he had a free moment. Then Jadwiga would polish shoes, clean the entrance hall and sweep the staircase of the two-story house, the upper floor of which was rented to a Mr. and Mrs. Pruchniewski. Jadwiga almost resented the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Pruchniewski because it meant that there was no chance she and Roman could move into the warm and comfortable space. Everyday she had those thoughts as she swept the stairs, and the thoughts would not be pushed away until she moved on to feed the rabbits and the chickens. By that time, the Dabrowski's would be awake and she would begin attending to them. Jadwiga prepared their breakfast, washed the dishes when they were done, and then cleaned and readied their bedroom for the evening. Around ten o'clock, when all of these chores were completed, she would prepare lunch by peeling vegetables and kneading dough for bread. Jadwiga would spend the next three hours mending clothes, linens and stockings. At one o'clock, the household was served lunch and then Jadwiga washed the dishes. Once a week she scrubbed the household

[illegible]

[illegible]

laundry, including her own clothes and those of Roman, in a tin tub with the use of a scrub board. Time seemed to pass by rapidly for Jadwiga and Roman, probably because they were too busy with their daily chores to notice its passing.

Mr. Dabrowski's hobby was making cigarettes. He bought tobacco and then used a little machine to roll the cigarette. Mr. Dabrowski put the finished cigarettes into packages, and then would send Roman to the railroad station in Zalesie Gorne with the cigarettes in a wheelbarrow. Roman traded the cigarettes for coal dust and pieces of coal from the railroad men. These railroad men always had items to trade as when German trains came with supplies and food for the Germans on the Russian front, the railroad men would steal everything they could get their hands on from the trains. They lived quite well until they were caught, at which time they were shot in the head on the spot. Coal was a necessary staple that very few people had anymore. If one had a piece of wood to burn, and then added a piece of damp coal on top of it, the fire would last a long time. The winter months were cold and endless and keeping warm was everyone's highest priority, even above and beyond obtaining food. After all, who could eat when their fingers were too frozen to hold food? Everyone tried to get at least a small piece of coal once in a while.

The railroad station was one large room enclosed by three solid walls and a frontage area with a ticket window where travelers could purchase their fares from inside, or on the porch outside. The small station was surrounded on each side by large trees and a little pond nearby teeming with carp. The German soldiers patrolled the area during the day, but at night when they went off duty, many townspeople, including the railroad men, would take fish from the pond. Roman's trading route often took him to the station and usually the men left him alone. One night however, the men were very drunk and started shouting and laughing when they saw Roman. The men were sitting around in such a way as to form a circle, passing liquor back and forth among each other. Their clothes were dirty, and their mouths were even filthier. One of the men ordered Roman to come into their circle. The men joked and laughed about pulling Roman's

pants down to see if the little salesman was Jewish. Roman unconsciously backed away from the group. One of the men reached out to grab Roman, but Roman kicked him as hard as he could between the legs and the man fell down. Roman sprinted up a nearby hill and climbed into a tree. Five or six of the men chased after him, but they were so drunk they didn't know what they were doing and finally left to seek more drink. Roman stayed up in the tree, with his heart pounding fiercely, for quite a while and when he determined that it was finally safe, he went home and told his mother about the incident. Mother and son thought it would be better if he immediately visited his friends in Warsaw and stayed there until the incident was forgotten.

Roman didn't take the regular train, as there were many Germans with guns traveling on them and it would also mean returning to the scene of the incident, so he took a little local-type train instead. Roman showed up on the doorstep of his friends, and after scaring them half to death with a knock on the door after dark, he was granted an enthusiastic entry. Roman stayed with his friends in Warsaw for a few days and when he came back to Jadwiga she told him that the railroad men came to their place and complained about Roman. They told Jadwiga that the man Roman kicked almost died. Jadwiga apologized and said that Roman was a good boy, had simply been hurt by the war, and was unable to cope with the reality that his father had been killed. She said that his actions were governed by fear, and that he never meant to cause any harm. The men had been quite frankly too drunk to remember the exact events of that evening, and Jadwiga's apology for her son made them feel guilty for frightening the fragile boy. They left Jadwiga with their own apology, and Jadwiga felt comfortable that Roman would be safe.

Soon after Roman returned from Warsaw, he met another boy his age named Edek. Edek lived in the woods in a villa near the Dabrowskis's house. Edek said that the woman he lived with was his aunt, but she was actually his mother, as Roman soon discovered. Edek's landlady was a very beautiful woman, a well-educated countess from Russia in her mid-thirties. The countess

spoke fluent Polish and took care of the members of the AK, the Polish Home Army, who had been shot or wounded. There were always quite a few wounded in the villa as the AK had two regiments in the woods. Some of the boys in the village were jealous of the adventurous tales Edek got to hear, so they began to make up tales about Edek himself. They spread the rumor that Edek was a Jew, and all it took was uttering that word once for the rumor to take hold. Roman knew the truth that Edek was indeed Jewish, but he covered for him. He told everyone that they had taken a bath at the same time and that Edek was not circumcised. Edek was a frail boy who was somewhat scared around Roman. He was nervous about the motives the blond Aryan boy had in befriending him, when everyone was saying he was Jewish. Roman knew his fear was based on the inability to trust anyone anymore, especially those one hadn't known since childhood. Roman always tried to put Edek at ease, and eventually the boy was able to relax a little bit.

The two fourteen-year-old boys did quite a few things together in this December month of 1943, and that included chopping down trees and then selling the pieces as firewood. The woods where Edek and Roman chopped trees belonged to the Germans, but the boys went deep into the woods anyway. After they cut and stacked the wood, they would hide the saw under a pile of leaves. One day, two German soldiers with machine guns accompanied by a forester caught the boys at their chopping work. Roman understood German and translated that the boys should be shot for cutting the tree. But, the forester lied and said in German that the boys could not have cut the tree down as it had already fallen down. The forester said the boys were just cutting off the branches. The forester then asked the boys, in Polish, about their task and Roman repeated everything the forester had said to the Germans. Edek was petrified but let Roman do all the talking. At last the German soldiers let up and the forester gave the boys a paper that said they could take the branches away. Roman could not believe that the man had so generously helped them, and he

vowed to come to the man's assistance if he ever needed it and gave a prayer of thanks for his good fortune before hauling away the branches.

Roman spent much time at Edek's villa and so met a lot of AK members that would come and go. One of these men, with the nickname of "Bimber," meaning distilling alcohol, asked Roman if he would like to help the cause. Roman agreed to transport hand grenades to Warsaw. The young man was so excited to help the AK that he accepted the dangerous task without any hesitation. On his way home to Jadwiga that day, he came to a full realization of what his actions could mean, and so he decided not to tell his mother about his new found job. Instead, he told her that he had a new trade route that would take him back and forth to Warsaw. As usual, Jadwiga did not press for further details. Two days later, Roman had a grenade sack prepared that was as tall as he was but weighed very little. The burlap sack was filled with dry hay, and hidden in the hay were two hand grenades. He told people that the hay was for rabbits since everyone in Warsaw had rabbits.

Roman's trip to Warsaw was on a small train. On the first trip, just as the train arrived at the Warsaw station, people started screaming a familiar word, lapanka, and everyone started to jump off the train. A man jumped off in front of Roman, and when Roman jumped, he landed right on top of the man. The man was incredibly angry, but Roman quickly grabbed up his sack and briskly walked to the streetcar that would take him to a specific address on Karzimierzowka Street. There, Roman knocked on an apartment door and after a delay a man finally answered the door by opening it no more than the width of an eyeball. Roman was scared but told the man that he was supposed to leave the sack at this address. The man thanked Roman, opened the door wide enough to drag the sack inside, and shut the door before Roman could even say that the man was welcome. Roman made the trip one more time, following the same route, but then he never smuggled for the underground again. It was a terrifying experience, as the Germans inspected bags and sacks that anyone was carrying by stabbing the parcels with their bayonets. Roman prayed that they wouldn't

find anything in his sack and fortunately on the two smuggling occasions, they did not.

After getting rid of the sack the second time, Roman went to visit Jurek and Tadek. Before this second smuggling venture, Roman had found a bayonet at the Dabrowskis and packed it in the sack of hay along with the grenades. He smuggled that bayonet too, during the whole trip, and brought it to his friends so that they would be impressed by his bravery. Jurek and Tadek used to say that the Jews were afraid of everything so Roman wanted to make sure his friends knew that he was not afraid of anything. He never wanted to give them any reason to think he was Jewish. The ploy worked. His friends certainly did not think he was Jewish, but they did think he was crazy.

When Roman returned to his home from the second smuggling run and visit to his friends, he noticed that from inside of the outhouse, a portion of the roof looked heavy. So he stood on the commode and moved the ceiling apart. There inside he discovered a compartment that contained a box. The box contained several gold pieces, a lot of jewelry and a revolver. Roman later learned from the sixteen year old granddaughter of Mr. Dabrowski that her father, Mr. Dabrowski's son, was the head of the NSZ, National Armed Forces, and that the contents of the box Roman had found in the compartment was from Jewish people that her father had robbed. Barbara went on to tell Roman that she and her father wanted to clean up Poland of all Jews. The Germans knew about the NSZ but did nothing because they knew the NSZ were killing Jews and making their jobs easier. Barbara explained that she acted as a lookout for her father. Roman was sick when Barbara revealed this information to him because the young boy had fallen in love for the first time. He couldn't believe his new love felt this way.

The spring of 1944 arrived and although the weather was slightly warmer, life was by no means easier for Jadwiga and Roman. The Dabrowskis assigned even more chores, and expected the tasks to be completed faster and faster. Now Jadwiga and Roman had to pick and clean strawberries and raspberries and

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

tend to the potatoes in the fields. These tasks required a strength and stamina that Jadwiga and Roman did not have. The winter had left them undernourished as the Dabrowskis only allowed Jadwiga two bowls of thin soup and a piece of bread per day, and Jadwiga gave most of her portion to Roman. Jadwiga's job had become even more difficult as her resentment of the Dabrowskis grew. They had promised to treat Roman as a son, but it was obvious that they simply wanted the mother and son as slaves. In addition to his other duties, Roman picked mushrooms for him and his mother to eat and took to killing rabbits by catching them on a wire. Roman had figured out how to fashion a lariat from the wire and hide the wire in the brush in such a way that the rabbit would stick its head in the loop and choke. Each morning before he began his work for the Dabrowskis, he would check the wire traps. Roman would make shoes from the skins and Jadwiga would cook the meat for them whenever she had a free moment. Although their strength started to grow again, they were still in no condition to perform the hard labor required of them.

In spite of his misery, Roman continued to be very cordial to everyone he encountered and he was rewarded with respect. Partly this was due to the fact that he told everyone that he met with his father in the woods, as his father was with the resistance. He would tell them that if anything happened to him, his father would get the person. But mostly it was due to the good nature and friendliness of the young man. Some of the girls in the villages helped him learn the preferred method for picking mushrooms and tracking the rabbits. All in all, his methods were not entirely dissimilar to theirs. Jadwiga was stunned over and over again that her city-bred upper class son understood the ways of the woods as though he had lived there his entire life. He was also lucky that these friendly and helpful people did not believe him to be Jewish, because he and Jadwiga had nothing left to give the police or the blackmailers. What little they could earn at their odd jobs, they spent on tiny inadequate bits of food. To earn extra money, Roman would trade some of the things he collected in the woods to Mr. Sawicki, who, in turn, gave Roman socks and other warm items. This arrangement

enabled Roman to keep whatever profits could be made from the warm clothes. Roman would go to the villages and exchange those things for the food that kept him and his mother alive. Roman credited Sawicki for saving his and his mother's life and giving them many of the things they needed to survive. It was not an accident that Mr. Sawicki was there for Roman and Jadwiga when they needed him. Sawicki had fought along side of Isidore against the Russians so many years ago. Sawicki had been critically wounded in one of the battles and Isidore risked his own life to save Sawicki. Isidore slung his friend over his back and carried him out and away from the battle to safety. Sawicki told Roman once that he owed his life to his father.

Each day after Jadwiga completed her duties for the Dabrowskis, she went home, washed, took a little rest, did the laundry for her and Roman and then spent a few hours sewing with the seamstress. Jadwiga had also started doing laundry and ironing for a friend of the inspector. There were now clothes always hanging in the house and on the porch, and Jadwiga was worried that her chores were never done. Roman was now the inspector's handyman and Mrs. Dabrowski's errand boy, and he also chopped wood for the Pruchniewskis. When the Germans demanded that the local population must dig trenches so that the Russians would not be able to see the Germans when the planes flew over, Roman was sent to dig for himself, his mother and the inspector's entire family. At the trench site, Roman met an old man who was much too weak for the labor so when he finished his own triple share of digging, he would stay and help the old man. Roman always acted like he was digging, but as often as he could, he would put shovels full of dirt back into the trench. It gave him much pleasure to thwart the Germans in that small way.

Although he worked extremely hard, Jadwiga could see that Roman was getting restless. He would disappear for entire evenings and refuse to tell her where he had been. She feared that he was working with the resistance and whenever she would hear a noise at night, she imagined it was the Germans coming to arrest her son. It was also around this time that Mrs. Dabrowski's

attitude toward Jadwiga changed. The change was subtle at first, but as the intensity of Mrs. Dabrowski's attitude increased, Jadwiga's reaction to it grew as well. Mrs. Dabrowski began to follow Jadwiga during her chores and commanded that she complete them more quickly. The frantic pace that Jadwiga kept made her careless and one day she cut her finger very badly. The finger became infected and would not heal. An old woman was hired to help with the laundry and orchard chores and while Jadwiga liked the old woman, she felt that her job was threatened by this new set of circumstances. She and the old woman grew close and eventually Jadwiga confided to her that the infected finger was the fault of Mrs. Dabrowski. She had forced Jadwiga to do the laundry outside in terribly cold weather and she had to constantly plunge her hand into boiling water followed by freezing cold rinse water. Eventually it just split open.

Jadwiga was in constant pain but Mrs. Dabrowski didn't care. The woman ordered Jadwiga to do the work on her own personal time if she couldn't finish during her regular work hours. Although Jadwiga could barely use that finger, or the hand for that matter, Mrs. Dabrowski ordered her to carry a heavy trunk into the cellar. At least the old woman was there to help her. It turned out that the old lady dabbled in medicine like many country folk and she advised Jadwiga to put raw onion on her finger and wrap it in onion leaves from the pot in order to cut the abscess. Because of all the constant work Jadwiga had to do, it took a long time for the finger to heal and if it hadn't been for the old woman's help it probably never would have healed.

Although it was springtime, the weather had not grown much warmer. Sometimes to escape the cold Jadwiga would hide upstairs in the Pruchniewski's hallway where she would do her mending crouched near a little eating oven and praying not to be discovered by Mrs. Dabrowski. The Pruchniewski's were great friends of the Dabrowskis and there were constant dinner invitations back and forth. It seemed to Jadwiga that Mrs. Dabrowski liked Mr. Pruchniewski a little too much. Whenever they would get together there would be hello and goodbye kisses of lengthy duration. Mrs. Pruchniewski, a tiny, blue-eyed blond who

always looked to Jadwiga like she was sad and dreaming, did not seem to mind, however. Mr. Pruchniewski, in contrast, was tall, energetic, lively and cleaver. Mr. and Mrs. Pruchniewski both liked Roman and Jadwiga, and were very kind to them. But, sadly, they tried to avoid them out of regard for the Dabrowskis. When Mrs. Dabrowski eventually caught Jadwiga by the little heating oven her anger was unmatched. Mrs. Dabrowski forbade Jadwiga to go upstairs and sit by the oven any more. She called Jadwiga lazy, and told her that she was lucky they allowed her to stay on as their housekeeper. If it were not for her son, they would have thrown Jadwiga out long ago. After that, Mrs. Pruchniewski went out of her way to avoid Jadwiga and Mrs. Dabrowski took every opportunity to make Jadwiga's life more miserable. She even commented on Jadwiga's churchgoing habits, which forced Jadwiga to go to church more often and be more careful. Jadwiga resented having to alter her behavior with such calculation, but she actually found herself enjoying church. There she would unburden her soul to God and cry freely for her husband, her daughter, and her brothers and their wives, other relatives, and so many other people. The neighbors would whisper with understanding that Jadwiga was crying for the husband she lost in the war and they were not far from the truth. Jadwiga would sit in the church facing a portrait of Jesus, and would pray to Jesus in her own words, justifying her prayers since Jews and Christians believed in the same God. She explained to the Lord Jesus during these prayers that she would never abandon her own faith and that she was sorry that she had to pretend that she was Catholic in order to save Roman's life. She prayed that God would forgive her. Much later Jadwiga found out that the priest in that particular church had saved several Jews and she prayed that God would reward him a thousand times.

The Binkowski's had given Jadwiga a prayer book that she now always carried with her. Evidently, it had originally been a present to their daughter because it bore an inscription on the cover that read, "to our daughter from her parents." Jadwiga studied the prayer book constantly. She underlined the Ten Commandments and read them over and over. But, in spite of all this show of

[illegible]

[illegible]

religion, whenever Jadwiga spent time with the seamstress, she became very stressed. The woman hated Jews and would constantly vent her anger about them. Jadwiga feared she might do something wrong in front of the seamstress that would give her away. Adding to the stress of the situation, the seamstress' husband was a disgusting drunkard and he began to pay more and more attention to Jadwiga. In her presence, he pointed out to his wife how clean and refined Jadwiga was and he even threatened to leave the seamstress for Jadwiga. And although he always kept a physical distance from Jadwiga, the man frightened her. The more he admired her, the more alarmed she became about what the seamstress might do. But strangely enough, the woman did not resent Jadwiga but rather treated her as a friend and confidant. Instead of hiding her problems with her husband, the woman openly discussed them with Jadwiga. Jadwiga relaxed in the woman's presence, but she always bristled when the topic came to the Jews. Jadwiga tried her best to say little when the seamstress ranted about the Jews, and with the exception of those conversations, the women shared a friendship. Jadwiga even opened up about her own troubles with her employer, leaving out any reference to tensions caused by suspicions that Jadwiga was Jewish.

Sometimes the seamstress would even offer Jadwiga a bowl of soup knowing that Jadwiga's employers were stingy with their food. The Dabrowski's had so much food of fruits, vegetables and meat, and yet they guarded it constantly. Neither Jadwiga nor Roman, nor any of the other employees, for that matter, got to have any of this food. The Dabrowskis, their children who visited often from Warsaw, and some special friends, were the only ones who were entitled to partake of the abundant fare. The whole time she spent there as housekeeper, Jadwiga never ate one piece of meat.

Once the inspector made Jadwiga go and weed the strawberry patch. She did so with enthusiasm as going to the strawberry patch meant getting away from all of them. The inspector commented that she must like garden work since she did it so well. Probably meaning well, the inspector told his wife that Jadwiga

should do the garden work regularly as she did it well and liked it. A few hours later, Mrs. Dabrowski told Jadwiga that she would not be doing garden work again and that she was to confine her chores to those performed inside the house. Mr. Dabrowski did not agree with his wife's orders, and the following day had Jadwiga work in the orchard once again. As usual, Jadwiga left the Dabrowski house late that afternoon and went to the seamstress. When she arrived, she found a beautiful girl fixing a dress. She was tall and blond with deep blue eyes. The seamstress told Jadwiga that she was the daughter of some tenants to whom she had just rented a room. The new tenants also had a son. The seamstress confided in Jadwiga that she thought they were Jews even though the daughter did not look Jewish. The son, however, was definitely a Jew, and she figured that they might have adopted the girl.

The woman could not conceal her hatred for Jews and she made her new tenant's life miserable. She even called the police to check on their papers. The family's name was Bornet and they had impeccable French documents that passed the scrutiny of the inspection. Jadwiga was not surprised when the family moved away from the seamstress's home, but so as not to offend the seamstress, they still brought her work and paid her generously.

One day the seamstress asked Jadwiga to deliver a blouse to Mrs. Bornet at the villa where they now lived. Jadwiga did not need directions to the Bornet home as Roman and Mr. Bornet's son had become close friends. Jadwiga liked the Bornets and they shared many friendly conversations. As it turned out the Bornets had been very wealthy, having owned steamships and factories before the war. Young Bornet even gave Roman some books and a small oil lamp to use in their room since Jadwiga and Roman had no lighting in their own home. They were nice people and Jadwiga looked forward to seeing the family. Jadwiga had almost reached their villa when two German soldiers appeared out of no where. They pointed their rifles at Jadwiga and blocked her way. One said, "Halt, wer kommt, zu dem haus must hier bleiden." Jadwiga translated the words as, "Whoever approaches this house must stay here," but Jadwiga pretended that

she did not understand and took a step to turn back. One of the soldiers grabbed her arm and dragged her into the house. Luckily, Jadwiga never went anywhere without her *kenkarte* and when they gestured for her papers, she turned them over. The Germans asked Jadwiga why she had come to the house but she feigned ignorance to their questions and did not answer. Mrs. Bornet appeared and Jadwiga told her in Polish that she was sent by the seamstress to deliver a blouse. The Germans became incensed and started shouting to Jadwiga because she was not responding to their questions. She muttered back to them, "Nich fershtey," meaning, "not understand." They demanded that Mrs. Bornet translate. So she explained in excellent German why Jadwiga was there. The German soldiers spoke secretly to one another and then turned to Jadwiga and Mrs. Bornet and ordered them into the other room.

Jadwiga saw that the daughter and son were already waiting in the room and that both were deathly pale. Two soldiers stood with pointed rifles by the window and another was unarmed in the corner. Mrs. Bornet's daughter was pressing a hot water bottle to her stomach and was complaining quietly that she had stomach ache. Mrs. Bornet explained to Jadwiga that on the previous day some men had attacked her daughter and that the mayor had sent soldiers out to investigate. Jadwiga whispered to the boy that he should slip out through the only unguarded window. The boy responded to her that his family had nothing to hide, and that the horrible seamstress had caused this problem, but that once their papers were checked all would be well. The soldiers at the window heard the whispering and asked what was going on. Mrs. Bornet told them that Jadwiga wanted to go home as she had a lot of work to finish and was afraid to walk alone in the forest after dark. One of the soldiers said they had to wait for an officer to come and check Jadwiga's papers. Mrs. Bornet, trying to act as naturally as she could, proceeded to serve a dinner that no one ate, although two soldiers did drink some tea. Two hours passed before the officer came. He told Mrs. Bornet that they caught the thieves who attacked her daughter. The officer also said that the thieves told them that they had worked in the Bornet factory

before the war and that the Bornets were identified as Jews hiding behind French documents. Mrs. Bornet maintained her calm and said she didn't care about the thieves or what they accused her and her family of. The officer said that the papers were in order, but that Mrs. Bornet and her children would still have to come with him to the prefecture at Gura Kalwarji. He also added that he was just doing his duty.

One of the other soldiers then pointed to Jadwiga and asked the officer to check her papers. He did so, and sent her on her way. Jadwiga mentioned that she was afraid to walk alone after the curfew but the officer told her not to worry and just get going before he changed his mind. Mrs. Bornet's son walked Jadwiga to the door and whispered to her to inform the mayor that the Germans had taken them to Gura Kalwarji. Jadwiga agreed to relay the message and she left the Bornet home. She rushed home as quickly as possible and when she finally arrived, Roman was hysterical with worry. He became even more frantic when she told him what had happened. They stayed up that entire night praying for the Bornets. Everywhere Jewish blood was flowing and one could even see the fires in the Warsaw ghetto, where there were still a handful of residents, fighting to their dying breath. At dawn, Jadwiga ran to tell the mayor but he already knew what had happened and even more. It seemed that Mr. Bornet had run away, and the Germans had tortured the son to reveal his father's hiding place.

Somehow Mr. Bornet had managed to escape to a different hiding place before the Germans arrived. A campaign was launched to locate the missing Mr. Bornet. The soldiers hunted everywhere, but were unable to find him. In the meantime, the soldiers continued to torture young Bornet, who revealed there was money hidden under the dog-house. The Germans tore the home apart, took the money and then transported the mother, son and daughter to Gura Kalwarji. The papers for the Bornet's were definitely in order, but the Germans undressed the boy and saw that he was circumcised. All three Bornets were shot

that night. One of the soldiers offered the daughter the option to trade her body for her freedom, but she could not be persuaded to leave her mother.

Jadwiga was exhausted from lack of sleep and when seven o'clock came, she went to work. The inspector asked her to go to the Bornet villa for news. Jadwiga told him there would be no news from the Bornet home as they were no longer there. She then related to him everything that had happened, and what the mayor had told her about the fate of the Bornets. The inspector was visibly devastated, as he had been close to the Bornets. Jadwiga automatically did her work the rest of the day and then went on to the seamstress' house. Once she arrived there, she told the seamstress that she was ill and could not work. The seamstress was in excellent spirits and told Jadwiga to rest and be well. Jadwiga had the uneasy feeling that the seamstress had heard about the Bornets and that her mood was related to the news, although the woman didn't say anything. On her way home she met a neighbor who suggested that the Bornet's fate had come about because of the seamstress. The seamstress had been blackmailing the Bornets for three years and when their money started to run out, the seamstress provoked some of the Bornet's old workers to stage the attack on the daughter. Jadwiga was sick and disgusted with the whole situation and when she got home, she wept for a long time.

Horrible stories now reached Jadwiga about the Warsaw ghetto. The ghetto revolt was unsuccessful and now people were jumping out of windows of multi story burning buildings and were being shot in mid air by the Germans. Some tried to escape through the sewer system and most either suffocated from the stench, or made it to the Aryan side only to fall into the hands of Polish hoodlums lying in wait at the sewer exits. These Polish watchdogs received payment from the Germans for their services with a bonus given for each Jew caught. After the Bornet incident, the seamstress expressed her boredom to Jadwiga. She said that now that the Bornets had been apprehended and destroyed, it was time to turn her attentions to someone else. The seamstress asked Jadwiga questions such as, "Did Jadwiga go to church regularly?" and,

"How often did she go to confession?" Jadwiga told the seamstress that she had her own confessor in Warsaw and saw him at Christmas and Easter. This was a good story since she and Roman would be away at Christmas and Easter. They had accepted an invitation to visit their old friends the Brzezinskis, the in-laws of the Brzezinskis, the foresters. Jadwiga and Roman had remained close to this wonderful family after moving from their brother's household. Jadwiga and Roman felt very comfortable about accepting the invitation, as they had been able to learn all the holiday rights a long time ago. No one would ever have suspected that mother and son were not Roman Catholic.

The Brzezinski's daughter had been one of Jadwiga's students and was also Jadwiga's namesake. The girl remained fond of Jadwiga and always wrote to her on her Saint's day. Jadwiga had also made some other friends in that area. Some she had met in the forest campground, although when she lived there, they had been afraid to acknowledge her. Now that she worked within the severely anti-Semitic Dabrowski household, they were confident about being her friend. Her friends treated her as though they had known her all their lives, and they treated Roman even better. Even the Vogels openly visited Jadwiga and Jadwiga often went to their home. During these visits the stories flowed freely, and everyone caught up with one another. Jadwiga talked about the Bornet family, finding it very difficult to relay the information without showing too much emotion. Jadwiga also expressed how difficult it was to work for the Dabrowskis. She told her friends they the employers were so demanding that she and Roman couldn't keep up with the work. The Vogels told Jadwiga that she should come to them if she ever had trouble with the Daowwoskis, and promised that they would take care of her. Whenever she went to visit them, Jadwiga always took flowers and deposited them at the small chapel by the gate and every Sunday she accompanied them to the monastery chapel.

Right about this time, the inspector became seriously ill and required a nurse. Jadwiga thought of Hanka Teczynowa, the nurse now living in a hotel with her little girl. Jadwiga decided to recommend her to the Dabrowskis. In spite of

her troubles with Hanka, Jadwiga suggested that they offer Hanka a room. Jadwiga knew Hanka was being blackmailed at the hotel where she lived. Jadwiga did all this even though she was certain Hanka and her daughter were Jewish, as both had distinctly Semetic features, and the little girl spoke polish with a faint accent. Hanka told everyone that the child was adopted, and Jadwiga never mentioned her suspicions to Hanka, nor did she reveal her own identity to Hanka. It was disgusting, but Jews feared each other as much as they feared anyone else. The inspector and Hanka reached an agreement where she would attend to him and give him shots in exchange for room and board.

The room given to Hanka and her daughter was on the second floor and it was spacious, light, and fully furnished. Jadwiga was somewhat jealous of these comfortable accommodations assigned to the nurse, as she and Roman still had to cope with their shack. However, Jadwiga did recognize that living right with the Dabrowskis would actually be more difficult than living apart from them. When Hanka moved in, she also brought with her a friend who was the local priest's housekeeper, but looked Jewish. In the beginning, Hanka was very pleased, as was the inspector, with the arrangement. But then Hanka became much less happy when she discovered that the Dabrowski's son and daughter-in-law were members of the NSZ, the group that had been blackmailing Hanka at the hotel. Hanka offered to help Jadwiga financially as a way of repaying Jadwiga for her help in getting her the nursing job. Hanka explained that a Madame Olga from Warsaw was sending her a small allowance and would probably do the same for Jadwiga. Jadwiga was puzzled but Hanka would not discuss it further or in detail. Jadwiga later found out that the help came from the "Joint" located in Warsaw. It was an American philanthropic organization, and it was providing an allowance for those Jews in hiding whom it could reach. Jadwiga felt cheated as she had been so cut off during the war that she had known nothing of the organization.

One day the inspector's brother-in-law, an ex-professor, and the black sheep of the family, arrived on the doorstep of the Dabrowski home. He drank a

lot and suffered from Tuberculosis. Although he was ashamed of him, the inspector took him in as the man was dying. The Dabrowskis asked Hanka what they should do, and where they should put the brother. Hanka, worried about her own room, suggested that they put the sick brother in Jadwiga's shack. No one asked Jadwiga about this and they simply moved a bed into her room, put the brother on the bed, and told Jadwiga to take care of him. Jadwiga was very angry with Hanka for her role in this latest situation. When she saw the brother for the first time, Jadwiga almost fainted. The man was a living corpse. Mrs. Dabrowski, who wanted her brother-in-law to die quickly, starved him mercilessly. Her poor husband knew nothing of this and nor did he check on his brother's progress. Once in a while he would inquire about his brother to his wife, and his wife would assure him that the sick man was being well fed and cared for. Jadwiga did not dare contradict Mrs. Dabrowski, and so she cared for the inspector's brother as best she could.

The sick man was delirious with fever night after night and Jadwiga and Roman got no sleep. The man also despised Jews, and ranted and raved constantly about them, even in his illness. Roman was exhausted and so tense that at one point he threatened suicide. But, in spite of all of this, Jadwiga's worst fears came from the man's contagious illness, and she was so afraid that the run-down Roman might contract the disease. Her neighbors advised her to have a doctor come to examine the man. The doctor would surely force the Dabrowskis to send him to a hospital. Jadwiga struggled with the decision as to whether or not to call a doctor. She was desperately afraid of the Dabrowski's response to such a bold move, but she decided that the alternative was too risky. If Roman fell ill, it would all be over. Jadwiga found a kindly woman doctor who came to examine the sick man and then went directly to the Dabrowskis and accused them of criminal negligence. The doctor was outraged that they had put a man with a contagious disease in the same room with a young person. Right there, she demanded paper and composed a letter to the hospital. The doctor warned the family that even under the reprehensible conditions, it wouldn't be easy to

obtain a hospital bed for the man. The Dabrowskis were very angry with Jadwiga and left the brother in her room with no improvement to his care while he was waiting for a hospital bed. Jadwiga actually pitied the poor man and continued to do her best to attend to him. At night when he screamed that he was hungry, she shared her meager food with him. At such times, he kissed Jadwiga's hands telling her that without her care, he would surely have died of starvation. The care made it easier when she pretended that the man was Isidore.

One day, the man told Jadwiga to tell the inspector that he was going to die soon and that there was something the inspector must know. When Jadwiga delivered the message, the inspector rose to go out but his wife stopped him. She did not permit him to go and see his brother. Jadwiga tried to calm the sick man when his brother did not come, and she kept telling him that the inspector would get there. The man was feverish and as he waited for his brother, he began screaming and pouring out invectives against the Jews. He felt that they were subhuman and that they were the cancer eating away at society. Apparently, the man blamed the Jews for his condition. When his brother did not arrive, the man took a turn for the worse and what made it even more horrible was that he also suffered tremendously from the cold.

While Jadwiga pitied the man and tried to help him as best she could she interpreted the manor of his death as God's punishment, giving him a taste of what the Jews had suffered. He began dying that night screaming that red hands were choking him and that a Jew was standing by his bedside. When Jadwiga followed the dying man's gaze, she, too, saw the shadow of a human head on the wall. Jadwiga believed that it was her father and that he was interceding with God to take the sick man away so that his daughter and grandson wouldn't suffer any longer. Her comfort in this thought was immeasurable. By morning the man was in agony. Jadwiga ran to get the priest and she was told that the priest would come to the man as soon as he could. Jadwiga had left Roman to watch over the man, but when she got back home Roman was standing outside. He told her that he was too frightened to stay in the room. When the priest came, he [illegible] of being [illegible]

[illegible]

asked why the man had not been prepared and why the family was absent. Jadwiga said he was disowned by his family, and she then left the man alone with the priest. Minutes later, the priest came outside and told Jadwiga that there was nothing more he could do. Before the priest left, he blessed Jadwiga and Roman.

Jadwiga sent Roman over to tell the Dabrowskis of their brother's death. They asked Jadwiga not to mention anything about the affair and told her that they would reward her handsomely for everything that she had been through. Then they held a lavish funeral and the village praised them for their generosity and devotion to such a worthless member of the family. The entire affair was a farce. Hanka claimed to have been unaware of the suffering she had caused Jadwiga and Roman, but even she didn't escape the unpleasantness entirely. Hanka was charged with washing the corpse and dressing it for the funeral. Again Hanka attempted to shift the burden to Jadwiga, but this time Jadwiga refused and had the satisfaction of seeing Hanka struggle with the vermin infested corpse. When the doctor found out that the sick man was dead, she ordered that Jadwiga and Roman be taken into the winter house for two weeks so that the summer villa could be thoroughly disinfected. Although reluctant, Mrs. Dabrowski was forced to agree to this. Mrs. Dabrowski took her revenge, however, by driving Jadwiga mercilessly for those two weeks. Jadwiga was actually glad when she could finally get back to her own place.

Many weeks after the funeral the inspector sent Jadwiga to buy eggs from a neighbor. On her way back she noticed a few Germans in uniform stationed up the road. She decided they had not seen her and so she ran in another direction. Suddenly everything turned black and Jadwiga fell to the ground, passed out. When she came to, two women were standing over her body. When they saw that she had regained consciousness, they helped her up and tried to support her so that she could walk. But, with the first step, a sharp pain cursed through her body. Jadwiga screamed and the women left her lying on the ground. They said they were going to fetch her son and would be back. Jadwiga passed out again

and this time when she came to Roman and the two women were down on the ground hovering over Jadwiga. Roman, pale and frightened, kept asking what happened. The two women did not know, and Jadwiga wouldn't let anyone touch her, screaming that it hurt. Finally, Roman managed to get her up and gently support her to lead her home, although she fainted several times along the way. The women helped put Jadwiga to bed and then left. Roman did not know what to do. He held his ears so as not to her Jadwiga's moans.

For days Jadwiga could not move, but Roman was afraid to send for the doctor, as he feared it was too dangerous. The doctor might recommend that Jadwiga go to the hospital, and Roman feared that the scrutiny of their papers might bring trouble. It became his responsibility to take care of her. He fed her with a tiny spoon and consulted with Hanka about Jadwiga's care. When Hanka came and tried to examine Jadwiga, Jadwiga screamed so loudly that it offended Hanka, and she stormed out of the shack in disgust. Because Jadwiga did not report to work, Mrs. Dabrowski refused to send them food. Roman took the money they had saved from Jadwiga's sewing and purchased food. From time to time a neighbor, who sold sausage on the black market, would drop in and let them sample his food. Roman was barely able to survive on his own food share from the Dabrowskis, and now he had to share his portions with Jadwiga. He knew if he didn't, his mother would have no hope of recovery. Her recovery became his obsession.

This situation lasted for a whole six weeks, and the cause of all the agony resulted from several ligaments that had been ripped when Jadwiga had run away from the Germans. Roman took good care of Jadwiga and also kept a watchful eye out for the Gestapo. He had an AK hand grenade that Edek had given him and he kept it with him always, just in case. The boys had become closer than ever, and Roman told Edek that he was Jewish. At first, Edek wouldn't confess but at last he told Roman that he too was Jewish and he cried with relief that he could finally talk about it. It was actually the only time Roman shared his secret with anyone.

Once during her illness, the inspector paid Jadwiga a visit. He was sympathetic and somewhat embarrassed about his behavior and told Jadwiga he had meant to come sooner and more frequently, but a million things had prevented him from doing so. Jadwiga figured it was his nasty wife.

After the endless six weeks, Jadwiga started to feel better. When she could finally stand up for any length of time, Jadwiga began a general cleaning of the shack, which hadn't been touched during her illness, and within days she had resumed most of her duties for the Dabrowskis. One day when she went out to throw out the garbage in a pile behind the orchard, Jadwiga passed by a fully blooming raspberry bush. The raspberries were very inviting and Jadwiga could not resist the temptation to pick. Just a she put out her hand, the inspector appeared out of no where and chastised her by wagging his finger and stating, "Let this be the last time I catch you." Jadwiga was totally humiliated and apologized to the inspector. He was indignant and told her that since she was well enough to go out and about then she was well enough to report back to work at full capacity. She explained that she still had pain, but she promised him she would be back full force as soon as she felt able.

Meanwhile, Roman continued to do gardening for Mr. Latkowski who was from the town of Wolin. Roman would work in the man's gardens and when there weren't enough vegetables for the vacationers, the man would send Roman 20 to 30 miles away to purchase wholesale vegetables. The man treated Roman well but he had a nephew named Konrad, a boy with one green eye and one blue eye, who resented Roman dining with them. Although they were friends, Konrad would tell Roman to go back to work, while he, Konrad did nothing. And, he, like Roman, was madly in love with Barbara Dabrowski, who was very good looking. In fact, it was Roman who introduced Konrad and Barbara, and much to Roman's dismay, Konrad and Barbara would go off into the woods together. Still, Roman couldn't help liking her even though he knew what she and her father and grandfather were doing. On one occasion, Roman took a gold watch that he had found amongst the jewelry from the outhouse and gave it to Konrad to sell in

Warsaw. Konrad gave Roman 5,000 Zloty from the sale. Roman hid the money under a marble slab in their little shack and then would dole out the cash as he and his mother needed it. He told Jadwiga that he had earned the money by selling wood.

Edek kept Roman informed of the news of the NSZ and AK, as the villa where he lived had become the AK headquarters. Edek would tell Roman about the wounded AK that would come in and tell how they killed the Germans in the woods and blew up the German trains. Sometimes the AK would kill the Germans and then drag the bodies into the woods to be left for the animals to pick at. Roman loved to see those dead Germans lying around in the woods when he went out to pick mushrooms. Once when he was out picking, he came upon a whole group of AK dressed in civilian clothes and lying on the ground with their rifles pointed straight out. One of them stood up and pointed a gun at Roman and asked him what he was doing there. Roman told him he was looking for mushrooms and the AK said to just go on and get out of there. Another time when Roman was waiting to board a train from Piaseczno to Warsaw, some of the Germans had been running away from the AK, and the AK dynamited the train tracks near a flea market to prevent their escape. When Roman saw all the bodies of dead women who had been on their way to the flea market and had gotten caught up in the bombing lying around on the ground, he just walked around the bodies. He had become completely desensitized to violent death at the age of fifteen. Roman also continued to feel defiant and often collected potatoes from the German fields. Roman and some of the other villagers would sneak out under cover of night and collect as much as they could, as all of them constantly feared starvation. Roman ended up with quite a stash of potatoes that he kept hidden in a hole by their shack.

Yet another time, there was a train filled with Ukrainians trying to get to their allies in Germany. The AK discovered their location and sent another locomotive crashing into the train of the Ukrainians and their families. There were bodies all over the tracks as the travelers had come crashing out of the train.

The AK members ran around like lunatics cutting off the heads of the Ukrainians, whether they were dead or alive. A man who was passing gathered up Roman and some of the other kids who were there together and tried to get the kids not to look at this terrible sight.

Jadwiga, meanwhile, was still not fully back to work. Soon after her embarrassment with Dabrowski and the berry picking, a neighbor told her that they had killed some Jews at the Dabrowski's home. The family turned out to be the Pruchniewskis, the family living upstairs. The neighbor was appalled at how those Jews could assimilate. Mrs. Dabrowski, she told Jadwiga, couldn't stop spitting and wiping her face and was disgusted that she had let those Jews kiss her as if they were family. Jadwiga was shocked at what she heard. Mrs. Pruchniewski had come to visit Jadwiga during her illness and had been cheerful and comforting. She told Jadwiga at that time that the war would soon be over and that the Russians were very near, and that they had even reached the banks of the Vistula. While relating this story to Jadwiga, Mrs. Pruchniewski had stroked Jadwiga's hair gently and had been so happy and bubbling with life and energy that Jadwiga, if she hadn't known better, would have thought that liberation had been scheduled for the following day. Before leaving, Mrs. Pruchniewski had bent down and kissed Jadwiga. When the neighbor left, Jadwiga completely broke down. She felt like a crazy woman as she cursed the war and the Germans and the anti-Semites and she called down God's vengeance upon all of them.

The next day, Jadwiga discovered that the Pruchniewskis had not been murdered by the Germans, but rather by the Dabrowski's son. Hanka Teczynowa, whose room adjoined the Pruchniewski's apartment, had heard everything. The Dabrowski's son had knocked on the Pruchniewski's door at midnight and when the door was opened to him, he announced that he was a member of the NSZ. He then asked them point blank, "Are you Jews," and they answered yes. Dabrowski's son then read a death warrant out loud. A brief silence followed the announcement and then two shots rang out. Once the

execution was complete, several friends joined the young Dabrowski and the group proceeded to tear paintings off the walls and take everything else in the room that was of value. All Mrs. Pruchniewski's jewelry, and a beautiful gold cigarette case that belonged to Mr. Pruchniewski were taken away.

Now Jadwiga understood why Hanka had been unable to be sympathetic to Jadwiga's condition. She was simply too scared to draw attention to herself and Jadwiga after the Pruchniewskis's murder. Jadwiga thought back to a few days before Hanka came to examine her. Hanka had come into Jadwiga's room to warn her that the police suspected Jadwiga of being Jewish, but Jadwiga had been so sick that she didn't even care. She actually was resigned to being caught. She did, however, fear for Roman and pleaded with him to go into hiding. Roman refused outright to hide, and made light of the whole thing even taunting his mother's cowardice. Jadwiga thought that that was because either he did not want to leave her in her illness, or maybe he was still too young to fully understand the danger. But if nothing else, Roman was very expressive about his anger and hatred for what the Dabrowskis had done to the Pruchniewskis and how they treated his mother.

Hanka confessed to Jadwiga that she had heard some weeks earlier that the police were about to arrest a Jewish family living on the Dabrowski estate and she thought it might be Jadwiga. That information was leaked to the NSZ and since the information also said that the Pruchniewskis's had money, Dabrowski's son and his friends decided to, "do an act of justice." What they really wanted was to get the Pruchniewskis's money and valuables before the Germans acquisitioned them through a proper arrest. In reality, many of the Poles themselves, like Dabrowski's son, were worse than the Germans. Before the war they had even identified an, "enemy," and would put signs up that said this is a, "Jewish", store or home and not to, "go here." Furthermore, without the Poles there was no enemy. The Germans could not identify the Jews because to them all poles looked similar. The Germans relied on the Poles to point out who the Jews actually were. At least if the Pruchniewskis had been arrested by the

Germans, they would have stood a chance of continuing their deception with their impeccable papers and seemingly endless supply of money, and could have made it through the arrest alive.

Right after the murder, Hanka moved out of the Dabrowski house and found a job in a neighboring villa. There she was nurse and attendant to a very old woman. Jadwiga also decided that she would leave the Dabrowski home. By then, Jadwiga and Hanka had reached an unspoken understanding. Each knew that the other was Jewish, and that they were in the same situation. Hanka made it clear that she could not wait for the liberation, and she especially wanted to see that Dabrowski's son was hanged for his crimes. Jadwiga had no reason to disagree.

Chapter 27

Liberation did not bring an end to the misery that Jadwiga and Roman had suffered for so many years. When the Russians finally broke through into Poland, Roman would spy on the action to see what was going on. One day he traveled to the town of Piachectno and saw people ransacking what had once been a German hospital. The looters had killed all the Germans in residence and were going over the bodies, stacking them up in a pile after they were done with their search for valuables. Roman was disgusted at the actions of the looters, but also delighted that the Germans had been killed. There was still one German resident alive and the Polish army had surrounded him. The German was trying to communicate with the Poles to not kill him, stating that he had done nothing to these people. Roman thought the man's words were amusing, since after all, if he truly had nothing to do with the war effort he would have stayed in Germany. Roman understood the man's desperate words, but had no intention of translating for the German. Roman decided to let the man understand what it felt like to be frightened for his own life, with no way to reason for it to be saved. Roman watched the man for another moment, and then returned home to his mother. He embraced his mother and said that the war was really over and they would finally be safe. Jadwiga knew that once they located Halinka and Isidore, they could return to their lives as they had lived before.

Unfortunately, things were not going to be as they were before the war. Jadwiga and Roman had little money left, were completely out of employment options, and without direction as to where to stay or even begin to look for their family members. Roman suggested that they return to Kalisz, as they could reestablish ties with their community and probably even live in their home. Furthermore, Isidore would most probably start inquiries as to their whereabouts there. Jadwiga agreed, and with the last of their meager funds, hired a carriage to take them home.

When Roman and Jadwiga returned to their beloved Kalisz, they found it desolate and unlike their vision of home. Roman knew that they needed money and was desperate to provide for his mother. Their home had been completely gutted. All of their factories and all of their belongings were gone. Roman was frantic with worry about making money, so much so that he concentrated all his efforts on finding employment and leaving the search for Isidore and Halinka to his mother. He went to a meeting place in town and told his tale of woe to one of the Polish officers there, who suggested that Roman could exchange a bottle of Russian vodka for merchandise the Russians were looting from the Germans. Roman, who freely admitted to having no business sense, took the bottle and went to meet the Russians on the outskirts of town. One of the Russians deciphered from Roman's broken Russian what the young man wanted and gave him a case of swimsuits in trade for the bottle. Roman proudly returned to his Polish connection with the loot, whereupon the Pole chastised him and asked what the heck he was going to do with the swim trunks. "What have you brought me, are you crazy?" The swimsuits were proudly emblazoned with the German swastika right there on the front of the suit. Roman was humiliated, but took the experience as a lesson in being more careful when conducting business.

Transportation was greatly reduced by the liberation. Many of the Polish soldiers came through Kalisz on bicycles. Roman thought it was amusing to watch the fat soldiers with their torn and dirty uniforms peddle their way around town looking for odd jobs and donations. The soldiers often asked, "Do you have any Jews in this town?" They still had working guns and ammunition and offered to rid the town of the Jews at night, and finish the job the German's were unable to complete. Roman was stunned that after all the Jews had been through to survive the war, their fellow countrymen had still not learned the value of life. Roman was not about to sit around and wait to be killed by a bunch of drunken Polish soldiers, so he went to the railroad station and met one of the Russian soldiers there, who gave him an entire case of hand grenades. Roman took them home, unscrewed the detonators, and loaded a machine gun with bullets that he

had collected throughout the war. He then sat in wait. He was ready to teach the Polish hunters a lesson. He waited all night, propped up in a broken chair in front of the door, but they never came. Truth be told, Roman was a little disappointed.

Still charged up for a fight, Roman became bored with the lack of action. Although he had been re-enrolled in the post-war makeshift school, his emotions had not returned to normalcy. He had the overwhelming need to share his bravery with someone, as well as the need to show off, and so he selected a neighborhood kid, whose communist father was the head of the militia. Roman shared with him his plans to teach the Polish thugs a lesson. Jadwiga had no knowledge of Romans plans, nor that he was broadcasting the plans to others, and much to her surprise, Roman was arrested at school one day for having the weapons. Since this event occurred at school, all the kids came to visit him at the jail. Everyone laughed, including Roman at the absurdity of it all. The police scared Jadwiga half to death when they ransacked their home looking for the weapons, but they didn't find any as they were hidden deep in the stove ashes. Since it was summertime, the stove did not need to be used and Roman thought it was an excellent hiding place.

When Roman was released from jail, he told Jadwiga that he didn't want to be in Kalisz any more. There was nothing there for them and Jadwiga's search for Isidore and Halinka had proven fruitless. Roman joined up with a small unit of the Polish army so that he would be able to wear a uniform and have access to train rides. He and another friend continued to go from place to place trying to sell things, gather things, and get money to buy food. Although the trains were running, they would stop at certain places along the tracks, as prior to losing the war the Germans had gone along and bombed parts of the tracks. The passengers would have to get out and walk distances to pick up another train. One day Roman and his friend were walking along the bombed out part of the tracks going to the next train when they came upon a peasant in a cart. The man was extremely poor, and had a tiny chunk of bread that he was munching on,

Roman will never forget how the man offered to share this tiny piece of bread with Roman and his friend. On another occasion, Roman encountered an old acquaintance who said to Roman, “Dirty Jew, they didn’t do their job if you are still around.” Roman did not respond but went to a shop where Russian and Polish soldiers drank tea and Roman was able to ‘borrow’ a gun that had been loosely flung over the back of a chair. With the gun in hand, Roman returned to find the obnoxious acquaintance. He found the man and put the gun to his head pretending he would shoot him. The terrified man dropped to his knees and begged Roman for mercy. Roman told the man to never utter those words again and left the creep in the street on his knees. When he returned the gun to the chair from which he had borrowed it, the soldier who found it missing was frantic. Roman explained the situation, and the soldier responded with a phrase that meant courageous young man. He also kept talking to his mother, trying to persuade her to get out of Poland, and one day Roman just dragged Jadwiga by the arm to the railroad station. Roman had become somewhat distraught over an incident that had occurred between his mother and one of Isidore’s former employees. The man had been trying to woo Jadwiga and it seemed to Roman that his mother was susceptible to the handsome man’s charms. Roman was incensed, as, after all, they didn’t even know yet if Isidore was still alive. Roman ran the guy off with the threat that if the man went near Jadwiga again, Roman would kill him. It was against the law to leave Poland as the Russians wanted everyone to be under their communist rule. They arrived at the railroad station, and Roman knew that when you wanted to go somewhere, the Russians wanted to know where you were going, especially if it was to the other side, in which case they would arrest you. Jadwiga knew that the communists who were occupying these Polish towns threw people in jail forever when they broke the law, and so she was terrified of their departure.

In an attempt to legalize their escape, Jadwiga found a doctor, a Jewish officer in the army, and told him that they needed to find Halinka and Isidore elsewhere. He took pity on Jadwiga and Roman, and directed them to go the

border where his friend would have instructions to let them cross. Jadwiga already knew that the *volksdeutsch* lady had last seen Halinka while she was being processed, and their destination should first be the relocation point where Halinka had last been seen. Jadwiga attempted to research the list of those who had been relocated, and found that there was no record of Halinka. Jadwiga and Roman were forced to assume that she had died in one of the camps or going to the camp. As to the rest of her family, Jadwiga's brother Moryce had gone crazy after his wife was killed by the Gestapo, and ran around aimlessly in the streets. Mr. Sawicki told Roman to ignore his uncle, as the Gestapo was using him as bait to catch other Jews who recognized him. Jadwiga was also confident that Isidore had been killed as well. Isidore was far too well known in the Jewish community not to have been seen somewhere, and yet no one had heard or seen him in at least a year. Jadwiga had the strong suspicion that Roman was all the family that she had left, but she continued to look anyway. Mr. Sawicki finally told Jadwiga and Roman that Isidore and all of the people who had been sent to Lodz, had then been sent on to Aushwitz where Isidore had been shot to death. Jadwiga also found out that Dr. Gross-Chinagel and her husband had been sent to Lodz where the doctor had ended up giving her two year old son a lethal injection to save him any agony that might befall him. The good doctor did not survive the ordeal, but her husband did and eventually settled in Sacremento, California where he worked for the United States government.

Jadwiga and Roman met a sickly man who could barely speak and when he found out that they were leaving Kalisz, he wanted to go too. Roman couldn't figure out how they would take him but they felt so sorry for him having been in a concentration camp that they let him join them. The three boarded a train, and traveled for days and days and days, eating nothing but dry bread in railroad stations. When they finally reached the boarder patrol officer he yelled at them that they were crazy. He could not believe that they thought he could help them. Why should he risk being shot and killed for the three bedraggled strangers? He told them to get away and chased them away from the station.

They sat at the station to try to think of what to do next. They couldn't return to Kalisz since the bridges had been burned soon after they had crossed, and what was there to go back to anyway? Roman just wanted to get moving, and do something, but this task was made difficult because the sick man followed them wherever they went. He was like a zombie traveling only with the clothes on his back and a harmonica. Roman wished the man would go somewhere on his own.

There were armed Polish officers guarding the station. Roman was admiring one of the soldier's machine gun when his eyes met the officer's and they both recognized one another. The officer had been a partisan in the underground and he asked what Roman was doing there. Roman replied that he was looking for his father on the other side, and without hesitation the officer said that he would take them to the other side. The officer then put Jadwiga and Roman on the train, with the only things they had left of their life stuffed in their pockets. The only object carried was a loaf of bread that concealed what little Polish money they had left. The officer had them disembark the train at a small town, all destroyed, where the headquarters of the underground was located. He ordered them to stay put, and he would return at a later time to escort them onto a train destined for Berlin.

While at the headquarters, many others were sitting around drinking vodka and talking about German girls and other war related issues. Roman was bored and picked up a machine gun to investigate. Across the room, a man was sitting down, just fresh off a train. Roman pushed a button and to his shock the gun went off, shooting bullets that whizzed right past the man's head. Jadwiga turned white, and Roman was beside himself. The man calmly took a bottle of vodka and downed the entire contents in seconds never acknowledging what had happened. Both mother and son were so shaken, they could do nothing but look at one another's ashen face.

After a little while night fell and their officer friend joined them. He asked if they had any money or anything at all and they said they had a little. The officer

gave Jadwiga and Roman items like Gold watches and some other jewelry that he had stolen from the Germans, and told them that money would not have as much value as goods. Jadwiga and Roman were so grateful for the generosity of the officer that they were at a loss for words.

Their train moved out, and all along the way there were armed Poles and Russians milling about the land. When they got to the bridge of the Oder River, the Russian soldiers there stopped the train and suddenly Russians and Poles with machine guns started shooting like crazy at each other. It was a very chaotic and frightening scene, and everyone on the trains huddled together like scared children. As suddenly as it began, it was over, and the train started up again. When the train again stopped, people started jumping off the cars, and Jadwiga and Roman panicked before they realized that they were in Berlin.

In Berlin, they posed as Germans in order to go to the American sector. That area was allowing Germans to ply their trades. Jadwiga and Roman could easily pass as German since no one was there to recognize them, and since no one had papers anyway. Once again, there was nothing to eat. Roman took some of their money and went to the area, a former regular market that now housed the black market. There the Americans, English, French, and Russians were all selling goods. Roman wandered around the black market until he met a German who told him that as long as he spoke the language, he would give Roman cigarettes to sell to the Russians. If Roman would help him make the sales, he could have a piece of the profits. The German also had a pocket watch on a chain for sale, and Roman and the German sold the watch to a Russian for a large sum of money. Seconds passed before the Russian shouted out with anger after discovering that the hands didn't move. He threatened to shoot the man and Roman for cheating him right there on the spot. Roman warned his new found friend and because the Russian was so slow in drawing his gun, the man was able to escape. Then, Roman pretending to be on the side of the Russian, suggested that he and the Russian find the cheating German. Roman knew the man had escaped to the other side, and was therefore, safe from detection.

When the Russian became suspicious that Roman was still conning him, Roman jumped onto a passing streetcar to make his escape. The Russian yelled and chased the streetcar, but could not catch up with it. Roman thought his scheme was pretty clever for a boy of 16 years of age.

An event occurred soon after that changed Roman in many ways. The authorities were actively seeking war criminals, and Roman was approached to identify the whereabouts of one such criminal. Roman was asked if he knew where Dabrowski's son, his beloved Barbara's father, was hiding. When the man first came to Roman, he lied and had said that he didn't know where they had gone. But, actually he did, as Barbara had told Roman that they were going to Opole, a small town in Poland. Roman knew their location and when he didn't tell the underground man where they were, he couldn't sleep that night. The next day he went to the man and with his heart breaking, told him their location. Roman felt like he was a betrayer to Barbara but at the same time he felt he had done the right thing. Dabrowski's son had viciously tortured so many Jews, and maybe even some who weren't Jews, and Roman could not deprive those people of the justice due them. The underground went to the town where Roman said they were hiding, found Dabrowski's son, and executed him on the spot.

Now understanding how to make money in this post-war period, Roman found another officer, a good looking pilot, to enter into a moneymaking scheme. The man asked if Roman spoke German, and when Roman replied in the affirmative, the pilot told him of his plan. After the war everyone had money scripts, and this pilot had a great many of these scripts. Apparently, the Russians were printing it counterfeit, and for a while you could exchange these scripts for money. This pilot had amassed suitcases full of these money scripts and was eager to exchange them for goods at the Russian PX. For weeks, Roman would accompany the pilot as his translator to buy food and goods, and as the pilot was generous with compensation, Roman had enough food to feed himself, Jadwiga, and even others who had no food of their own. The Russian pilot was quite fond of Roman and when Roman told him he was going to America, the Russian

wanted to come along. Together, they all went to the English zone and then on to the American zone followed by the DP camp in Lipeheim located not far from Munich. Once there, they no longer had to trade the counterfeit script for food as the Americans who had care packages sent for that purpose, fed them.

Many months later after the liberation, Jadwiga was surprised to discover that three women from her husband's hometown had survived the war. Mrs. Sztyfter, and her two daughters, one of whom was married with a child, had survived on "Aryan papers." The three had indeed recognized Jadwiga when they had seen her during the war, but were afraid to let on to their identity just in case Jadwiga only resembled the Jadwiga they all knew. The rest of the Sztyfler family, as Jadwiga later learned, had settled in Lodz, and Mrs. Sztyfler's son-in-law had died before the war and was buried in a Catholic cemetery. Jadwiga also almost had another accidental encounter with her children's former Jewish teacher, Mrs. Arkush, who saw Jadwiga coming down the street but quickly turned a corner as she didn't want Jadwiga to see her. How horrible this situation was where Jews had to fear betrayal by other Jews for so long, even old friends. Mrs. Arkush, although careful among other Jews, did get involved in politics and got caught in a fight between two warring factions of the Polish resistance movement. She ended up getting shot in the forest. Jadwiga was sorry that they all hadn't been able to be together during the war at least being able to give one another support.

Jadwiga and Roman went from the camp on to the town of Stutgart where Jadwiga had a married friend. The friend's husband was a very refined man, but his brother who was living with them, was not. Roman enjoyed the time they spent in Stutgart, about two years, and enrolled in a jewelry making school. Roman found that his hands held skills that he had previously been unaware of, and he loved creating the beautiful decorations. There was a dentist whose laundry Jadwiga had been doing for over a year, who was also probably Jewish, and he and a Mrs. Baczkowski were close friends of Hanka's. Mrs. Baczkowski was a lovely and friendly woman who ran a boarding house. She had a fourteen-

year-old son who was friends with Roman. Roman had even tried to train him as a woodcutters apprentice at one point, but the boy was rather frail and couldn't do the job. Jadwiga later found out that the boy was the son of Mrs. Baczkowski's servant girl, and that their name was Goldberg. They were Jews from Lodz, and were friends of Mrs. Baczkowski before the war. So thanks to Mrs. Baczkowski they too survived the war.

Another friend of Jadwiga's, the wife of a major in the Polish army, had survived by living alone in the forest with her two daughters. Although the woman survived, her husband was not as fortunate. The Russians for some reason during the Liberation had taken him prisoner. Jadwiga heard he had died in Katin, but didn't know if the Russians or German had killed him.

Time passed, and Jadwiga sought the security that she had so long been without. Jadwiga dated, and under protest from Roman, married the uncouth single brother of her friend's husband. In 1950 Jadwiga and her husband found their way to New York City where they connected with Jadwiga's brother Shimon, who had been sent there in 1908 as the bad sheep of the family.

Roman was very angry with his mother for her marriage. He decided that the best thing for him to do was to leave for Israel in 1948. There, he became an Israeli soldier. His absence broke his mother's heart. While in the Israeli army, he was able to get his real birth certificate from Kalisz and then was eventually able to get a passport using his own papers. There in Israel, Roman also married. In 1954 Roman moved to New York where he lived until 1960 when he and his family moved to California, where he resides today.

Roman and his mother did reconcile and renew their devotion when Roman lived in New York. When Jadwiga's husband died in 1970, she moved to California to be with her son and his family. She remained in California until her death in 1983. Roman was with his mother when she died.

Afterthought

Jadwiga discovered many years later a postcard dated in 1943 that was a poem from Jadwiga Brzezinski, her namesake, that read, “the sun has set, the stars came out, and everyone should wish you well. We wish you luck, fortune, a long life and a crown in heaven.”